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Social discipline in the  
Christian community





SOCIAL DISCIPLINE IN THE  
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY



# SOCIAL DISCIPLINE IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

EDITED BY

REV. MALCOLM SPENCER, M.A.

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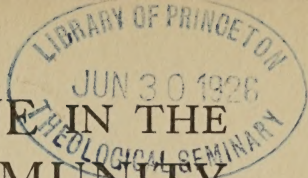
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## PREFACE

How this book came to be written, its connection with Copeck, and the questions which it attempts to answer, are set forth in the introductory chapter. It is only necessary, therefore, by way of preface to make one or two deserved acknowledgments and state what authority the book claims.

Chiefly our thanks are due to the Editor of *The Pilgrim*, who first printed for us the five articles which formed the basis and provided the bulk of chapters ii, iii, iv, vii and viii of this book (thus enabling them to be discussed), and then allowed us freely to rewrite and reprint them. We owe a similar debt to the Editor of *The Review of the Churches* for permission to use material now embodied in chapters i and ix but first set out in *The Review*. Chapters v and vi were kindly contributed at the last moment to complete our survey, and their authors are not responsible to the same extent as the rest of us for the general line of our thought. We thank also Miss Ruth Kenyon, the Rev. Will Reason, and Fr. Reginald Tribe of Kelham, for help in the construction or revision of the argument.

The book is issued with the authority of Copec, in the sense that Copec wishes it to be thus published ; but this does not commit Copec to all its opinions. Indeed the authors of the several chapters alone are responsible for their own statements in detail. At the same time, the general view of the subject thus presented has the full endorsement of us all, and we are united in submitting it to the earnest consideration of our fellow Christians.

M. S.

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## CHAPTER I

### SHOULD THE CHURCH LEAD ?

#### *(a) Christian guidance for social life*

THROUGHOUT the latter half of the nineteenth century, it has been a matter of constant dispute between contrary schools of Christian opinion how far Christianity is a message for the individual only, and how far for society as well. For some time before that, it had been the general belief that public social life was a sphere into which the finer moral and spiritual considerations could hardly enter ; a condition that explains why so much of our modern industrial, commercial and political practice offends the sensitive Christian conscience. But, during the years of the twentieth century which have so far run, it is fair to say that there has been a great growth and consolidation of the opposite view. The Christian community is increasingly sure that much neglected Christian social duty lies at its door, that important opportunities of Christian social service are being missed, that great Christian principles properly applicable to social life are not being so applied. And this is being recognised as a challenge to Christian faith and devotion, proceeding from the Spirit of God.

The dispute is not, however, entirely disposed of. It has indeed come recently to a new focus because of the public interest aroused by the " Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship " in

which the British Churches co-operated so fully in April, 1924.<sup>1</sup> This attempt to work out the broad lines of a Christian position upon the main problems of modern social life, and the twelve reports in which its results were published, have been very generally applauded. But some have doubted the value of these results, and feared the direction in which they lead ; and these doubts have found an extreme expression in the writings of the Bishop of Durham, whom we may perhaps take for a moment as the representative of the more individualistic and critical view.

If we understand the Bishop of Durham aright, he dissents from the Copec<sup>2</sup> movement chiefly on two grounds. In the first place he fears that any transference of attention from the fundamental spiritual principles and realities of our faith to the perplexing and intriguing details of their social applications must lead thought away from the higher to the lower, from the greater to the lesser, of the interests which the Church has to promote among mankind. In the second place he believes that this would not only be disastrous to the deeper spiritual interests of men, but that it would be futile even from the standpoint of their lesser interests as well ; the spokesmen of the Church would not, for all their zeal, be able to throw light upon the questions they thus essayed to illumine. He thinks that the leaders of Copec do not sufficiently realise the first danger, and that the result of Copec activities so far demonstrates the reality of the second. In a word, he thinks that in Copec we care

<sup>1</sup> In the International Christian Conference on " Life and Work," held at Stockholm in August, 1925, the conflict was even more marked.

<sup>2</sup> 'Copec' is a word which the British public has accepted as a convenient label for the Movement that came to a head in April, 1924, and we shall therefore make use of it here. The initials of the word are now interpreted within the Movement as standing no longer for a past conference, but for a present ideal : the Christian Order of Politics, Economics, and Citizenship.

too little for the things of the Spirit and deal too ignorantly with the problems of this passing life. To which we reply that these things are of interest to us just because we think their right handling is essential to the deeper spiritual interests of humanity, and, in spite of all difficulties, must therefore be undertaken.

*(b) The ground and motive of such guidance*

The first principle of all such guidance as we desire to see given is the motive of fidelity to the mind and purpose of Jesus Christ. Christian teaching is concerned with these social matters just in so far as their mishandling is stultifying the spiritual life of the present age; just in so far as their better handling would imply and implement a truer dedication of the mind and spirit of the Church to the works of love which Christ requires of His disciples, and without which they quickly part company from Him. We seek the truth and the right in social matters primarily in order that we may be, and may help others to be, more worthy disciples of His, more fully possessed of His Spirit, more widely active in His ways. We are not concerned primarily with the solution of the technical problems of economic organisation or political administration, though these are sometimes involved in a secondary way. We seek the conversion of the mind and spirit of man to the mind and spirit of Christ more than we seek the transformation of his outward life. It is the standards of Christian holiness that are most of all at stake. These social questions are of concern to the Church exactly in proportion as wrong attitudes to them express and perpetuate, in the minds of people professedly Christian, wrong attitudes to God and grave misrepresentations of His purpose for the world. Unchallenged principles underlie our current social axioms and our apathies and concurrences with social conditions as they are. These give

the lie to all our protestations of devotion to Jesus Christ and all our vaunted faith in the power of His Spirit in the world, and therefore Christianity is bound to take them up.

Indeed, it seems to us that silence here can only result in identifying the name of Christ with social apathy and moral indifference and slackness. Already the attitude of the Church on these matters has forced a large amount of the moral and spiritual enthusiasm of the modern world to look elsewhere for its leadership. It has thus already proved to be a disastrous neglect of vital duty for the Church to fail to give men an authoritative spiritual view of their social responsibilities and opportunities. The difficulty of doing so cannot remove the obligation to try; it can only throw us back upon a better use of our intellectual and spiritual resources. We cannot, for example, acquiesce in the view that because men of all political parties honestly profess to be sincerely Christian in their present political views and intentions, there is, therefore, no hope of their arriving at any intellectual synthesis of their opinions if they should make the attempt. Nor can we accept the Bishop of Durham's view that Christian ministers must be men of such incurable intellectual and moral stupidity that they are bound if they handle social questions at all, to handle them with the bias of their own class surroundings. Such opinions are altogether too sceptical of the energising power of the Christian gospel. It is only those who do not expect to find the social issues of their time illumined by Christian principle who will find themselves the helpless prey of their own social prejudices. We do not claim that it is easy to escape from private prejudice or even, apart from private prejudice, to apply the high principles of Christianity to the complex problems of social life. We do not claim that in any age it has been done with completeness or without

mistake. But we do claim that it has been repeatedly attempted, with obvious benefit both to the life of society and to the life and character of individual Christian men. And we believe that to-day it is as much needed and more possible than ever.

(c) *The Historical Approach*

From the days of the early Church onwards till our own day the Christian impulse to live in a Christian way has found itself thwarted by the embodiment of an alien spirit in the commonly accepted ways of life. Christian folk have found the spirit of worldliness, in its many manifestations, capturing and enslaving first their behaviour and then their mind and temper. They have therefore sought to mark the points at which this captivity is fastened upon them. They have called on each other for help to identify the ways by which, through thoughtless conformity to current practice, they may capitulate to the worldly spirit, and those other ways by which they may signally break away from it, and by so doing establish themselves afresh in the ways of Christ. So, from the days of the early Church onwards, we find this impulse to guard the purity of the soul's devotion leading to definite bodies of teaching on moral practice embodied in the organised systems of spiritual direction of successive times, and including more or less definite counsels upon the way to be a Christian where social, economic or political action is involved.

We have written this book in the belief that it is possible to learn something from these past efforts to make the spiritual direction of the Christian relevant to the actualities of his life in the world and its reactions upon the life of the soul. We hope that the Churches are about to make a fresh attempt to combine in some new practice the best of all that can thus be learned from the past. We are encouraged in this hope by

the treatment of Christian Direction and Discipline in the Copec Report on *The Social Function of the Church*. That report contained an emphatic plea for the restoration of a Christian Sociology, and for the renewal of the attempt, with other methods than those used of old, to bring Christian conduct into conformity with a Christian social ideal. The same plea was implicit in the companion volume of *Historical Illustrations of the Social Effects of Christianity*, which rapidly surveyed the social teaching and influence of the Church at successive periods from the time of the New Testament to the present day. A most impressive feature of that volume was its evidence of the direct Christian social teaching given in many periods of Christian history—from the first to the fourth as much as from the tenth to the seventeenth centuries of our era. It was this which led first to the further study of the subject of this book in a Copec conference in April, 1925, and now to the preparation of this book, under the guidance of one of the Copec Continuation research groups.

In writing on this subject we are well aware of the difficulties which arise from the divisions of Christian people into separated 'Churches.' These divisions not only complicate the difficulty of either arriving at or setting forth an authoritative view of the social ideals and obligations that a Christian ought to entertain, they even make it difficult to discuss the question of authority at all. We would like to say therefore that though we nowhere discuss the question of the relation of the separate 'Churches' to the one 'Church' we are well aware of the problem that exists. We believe, however, that it is not such as to prevent us from acting together, in many matters, as members of the One Body of Christ; and, we think that such historical studies as the present, help to pave the way to its ultimate solution.

The plan of our work is as follows. We first survey

the attempts that have been made by Christian leadership to give guidance in social conduct at three great periods of Christian history. We begin with the period of the early Church (chap. ii) when the inner motive and first instinctive principle and purpose of such guidance are most readily discernible. We pass from that (in chap. iii) to the central period in the life of the Mediæval Church, the period which of all others deliberately attempted to elaborate a scheme of Christian conduct for all the relationships of life. We close with the modern period (chaps. iv, v and vi), in which the breakdown of the last named scheme of thought has ushered in a period of rather chaotic reaction from the more authoritative guidance of the past, yet one having its own positive principles and its own constructive lessons for to-day. This cannot of course pretend to be a complete study of the history of the subject. It deliberately passes over the two great periods of transition in Christian history, the one preceding and the other marking the close of the Mediæval experiment. The choice of matter is guided by the belief that the periods chosen for examination throw into relief the main principles calling for consideration now, and that the periods passed over would yield no results of comparable value.

Having made this survey, we proceed (in chap. vii) to gather together and examine our gains. Certain principles of Christian conduct and certain methods and principles of Christian guidance stand out as a result. But before we proceed to apply these to the present situation, we pause (in chap. viii) to consider the changes in the modern outlook upon life and in the modern position of the Church that must condition the attempt. In a closing chapter (ix) we make our constructive suggestions, hoping that they will receive not only the critical examination of Christian thinking but the practical test of Christian experiment.

## CHAPTER II

### DISCIPLINE AND DIRECTION IN THE EARLY CHURCH

THE Church being the Society animated by the distinctive Spirit of Christ, the object for which it exists on earth must be the revelation of 'the glory of God' in the lives of His human creatures. Such is the Divine Will for men, implied in the very idea of man as made "in the image and likeness of God," yet only to be realized in each individual by a moral process of personal choice. The state of union of the human will with the Divine is thus man's true well-being, called in Scripture his 'salvation' or 'holiness'; and this state of 'holiness,' or life consecrated to the ends of love, it is the Church's vocation to bring about in men, in face of the manifold temptations to 'sin' which life presents to them.

Here we are brought at once face to face with the essential problem of Church discipline, which is the method by which the Christian Society has tried to secure that the practice of its members shall really approximate to the Divine will, as understood by it from time to time. A long and laborious process has in fact been needful; partly owing to the tentative and piecemeal way in which the requisite knowledge of the Divine Will, and of its particular applications to the complexity of social relations, has become present to the common mind of the Church; but still more owing to the moral factor in the case, the reluc-

tance of men, even within the Church, to conform in detail to the Divine Will which in general they have professed to accept, with more or less real intention.

Such being the vital meaning of discipline for Christianity, we have to ask how discipline has actually been exercised in the Church's history. The present study will try to answer that question as regards the Ancient Church, down to the cessation of the conditions due to the Roman Empire as its environment, after which the transition to the next great period, the Mediæval, may be viewed as in progress. In particular we shall seek to present such leading facts of the case as may suggest answers to certain questions as to the applicability of the Church's past experience to our own day and its very different conditions, social and psychological. Among these questions are the following: On past analogy, how far can the standards of Christian conduct which we may reach to-day, e.g., in connection with Copec and all it stands for, be enforced in Church life? What kind and degree of moral pressure is allowable within the bond of Christian fellowship? By what sanctions or by what kind of authority has the moral pressure behind the Church's discipline hitherto been brought to bear?

The question how Ancient Church discipline was exercised may be analysed under some three heads: (a) On what *principles* did it proceed? (b) What *methods* did it use, and why? (c) *Who* took part in applying it to particular cases?

(a) *The motive of early Church discipline: the moral solidarity of the Church.*

Under the first of these there emerge several matters connected with the distinctive nature of the Christian Church and the Gospel of which it is the special trustee. There was, to begin with, an intense sense of *Solidarity* between all members of the Church, in virtue of "the

fellowship of the Spirit," as "holy Spirit," an actual experience of Divine Life inspired from above, the Love of God evoking enthusiastic mutual love. Thus "if one member suffered" in any way, "all suffered." Strictly speaking, all Christian discipline, as relative to the Gospel of Redemption, was at first *remedial* rather than penal in aim and likewise in spirit. It was meant to restore health to souls stricken with disease, and to prevent infection from spreading further in the flock. Holiness is spiritual health, or such exercise of the soul or will as in the end leads to that result. The prime end of discipline, then, was that *Repentance* or change of heart which is the real condition of recovery of health. Christians had already experienced it, in becoming true members of the Body in which holiness or health of will abides as its essential quality, through the Spirit received from Christ its Head. Fresh need of repentance arose when such were betrayed by human frailty into the inconsistent attitude involved in disobedience to the Heavenly Father's will, more or less present in conscience. It was the function of discipline to bring home the inconsistency of some particular act or course of action in a Christian, as a member of God's redeemed Family, to his own consciousness, with a view to adequate repentance and renewal in Christian goodwill; and in its public form, discipline sought also to impress the consciousness of the Brotherhood itself, as a warning against others falling into like sin.

These, then, were the basal principles of Apostolic Church discipline. First, it was relative to the nature of the Christian Society as God's Family of Love, resting on Faith in God and man, and so on Hope for one's fellow-members, in the light of Christ's "good news" about the "Kingdom" of God's manifest power—of which the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was the pledge and foretaste. Next, it was remedial rather than penal. Lastly, there was the all-inclusive nature of

repentance, as the one condition of restoration of broken personal relations within the Family of God. Such repentance was conditioned by the abiding power of the radical repentance towards God, as revealed in Christ and His Cross, implied in the Faith which carried with it initial acceptance into God's living Family or People, made manifest by "the Spirit of adoption." Normally that adoption, witnessed by the Spirit "sent forth into the heart, crying Abba, Father," was experienced in the act of Baptism into the Name or Person of Jesus as the Christ or Lord; and it was on this basis, namely spiritual baptism into the New Covenant of the filial Life—as distinct from a law of "the letter" commanding from outside, with promises on the one hand, and pains and penalties on the other—that characteristic Christian discipline rested.

Accordingly ancient Christian discipline was, all along, relative to a *Covenant relation*, of which baptism was the objective sign and ratification, as well as the mark of definitive transition from one type of society to another—as is seen also most plainly on the mission field to-day. This Covenant involved a characteristic moral ideal to which the member of the Church at baptism pledged himself, as being the will of his liege Lord and Divine Father. At the very first it did not need to be made explicit, whether at baptism or in a period of preparatory instruction; for the conduct held pleasing to God was almost the same for Christians as for Jews, and it was from the latter that converts at first came almost exclusively. But when converts of non-Jewish antecedents, alike as to moral ideals and the intimate relation of these to religious devotion, began to increase, what had before been implicit was made explicit, as regards the moral contents of the allegiance into which Christians were baptised. Allusions to a "form (type) of teaching" or moral instruction (*didaché* or *didaskalia*), embodied in "wholesome words," appear in St. Paul's

letters to his Gentile churches ; and their full import is revealed most clearly in the written form of such " Teaching of the Lord " (as current in the name of the twelve Apostles) which passed into wide use in the sub-Apostolic Church, and was recovered about a generation ago. In this *Didaché*, touching " the Two Ways," Christian conduct is set forth as " the Way of Life " over against that of Death ; and it is explicitly prescribed as to be taught to candidates for Christian baptism.

The " catechumenate " during which such instruction was given, in association with the elements of Christian religious Faith—such as slowly assumed, during some four centuries, the form of the so-called " Apostles' Creed "—became gradually more prolonged. In the third century in particular we have full lists of ways of living and of livelihood<sup>1</sup> which the would-be Christian had to leave behind at baptism. Such facts afford striking evidence to the serious way in which the Church viewed the duty of laying a firm foundation for real Christian conduct in an instructed Christian conscience. This was *the prerequisite to the Church's right to exercise such thorough discipline* as it did use, if in spite of the support of Christian fellowship human frailty led to lapses from Christian ways of living. A vivid glimpse of the situation is afforded incidentally by the Roman governor Pliny's report, c. A.D. 112, to the effect that renewed pledging of themselves to their baptismal Covenant with God, to honour His service by obedience

<sup>1</sup> E.g., fornication or pandering to others' vice ; making objects of idol-worship ; the professions of actor, charioteer in the arena, gladiator or trainer of gladiators, hunter in the games ; any office responsible for gladiatorial shows ; the office of priest or custodian of idols, of soldier (with various modifications in documents of different date and locality), or magistrate with power of inflicting the death penalty. Other disqualifications are harlotry, male dissoluteness and impurity, magic, divination of any kind, or making of phylacteries. Concubinage, too, must be desisted from, or changed into legal marriage. (See the 'Hippolytean' Church Order).

to His will—including social righteousness—formed part of weekly Christian worship. It was, too, this background of solemn self-committal to an all-round Christian type of Christ-like life which gave such awful seriousness in the Church's eyes to "sins after Baptism"—grave sins, that is, such as involved clear and conscious breach with the Christian ideal in its very spirit. Such was the case in the second century in particular, as we see from the *Shepherd* of Hermas, which has Christian Discipline, and the possibilities of true repentance after the radical repentance in baptism, as its chief preoccupation. Here, too, we see emerging the problem of the Church's part in the matter corporately, by its discipline, and the limits of its authority here, as compared with the final authority of the Searcher of hearts Himself. We cannot and need not here enter into the particular solutions reached in different parts of Christendom, but with growing convergence on a common policy, alike as to the matter of the sins regarded as "mortal" or implying the virtual death of God's Life in the soul,—apart from a spiritual resurrection through a broken-hearted repentance indicated by outward signs—and as to the methods by which the Church strove to assure itself of this. Something will be said immediately of the methods used, which, broadly speaking, tended to become more specialised, external, and legal in form—with resulting dangers to the original spirit of the Christian life itself. But for the present it must suffice to have brought out how thoroughly the Ancient Church dealt with the duty and need of corporate discipline, for the sake both of the individual and of the Society which was called to exhibit Christ and His will of holy Love in all social relations.

(b) *The Methods and Standards of early Church discipline*

The methods of Church discipline, directed to the

awakening of conscience to the need and to the will for Repentance from some act or temper alien to the new filial and fraternal spirit proper to the Family of God, were at first wholly in keeping with the above principles. They were those calculated simply to bring to mind the violation of these principles by the conduct in question : and in the first age of the Church the primary method was brotherly remonstrance, and, if needful, reproof (*elenchos*, in later technical language *censura*), by which fault or sin was brought home to the conscience of the sinner, blinded by his very error and by the self-love which tends to false self-justification.

“ Reprove ye one another, not in wrath but in peace, as ye have it in the Gospel ” (*Didaché* xv. 3). Such rebuke, administered in the spirit of a physician and in fellow-feeling, as by those liable to like human frailty, took two forms, private and public, passing normally to the latter only through the former. In this process the personal witness to Christ’s will, the “ putting ” the offender “ in mind ” (*nouthesia*), became more weighty in moral authority either by the addition of others than the person wronged, or through the taking up of the case by the leaders, the representatives of the corporate conscience of the local Brotherhood (Matt. xviii. 15 ff. ; Gal. vi. 1). The form and stage of discipline known later as “ penalty ” (*pæna*) came only after refusal to learn by the first form of instruction or putting in mind ; and in the primitive phase of Church life and discipline it was confined to withdrawal of the countenance and fellowship of the brothers, corporately and severally, until such moral isolation had brought the offender to his right mind in true repentance, shown by overt confession before the whole local Church, which had been cognisant of his former attitude. The secondary sense of penalty (*pæna*), viz. “ penance,” or concrete acts prescribed by the Church as tokens and enhancements of true penitence, is not known to have existed

until the Church had passed beyond its strictly primitive phase, into that stage of development at which the various usages and institutions distinctive of the early "Catholic," as compared with the "Apostolic," Fathers were emerging into definite form. For while by common usage, resting on public opinion or the collective mind of the Church—its unwritten "Rule" (*Canon*)—"the way of the penitent was 'hard and toilsome,' " on the witness of Origen, which probably reaches back to the end of the second century; yet down to the time of his death, after the middle of the third century, evidence is lacking "that as yet particular 'penances' were imposed" by the Church. Rather "the state of penance," in which excommunication from Church fellowship *ipso facto* placed one who was not defiant, "was conceived as one of 'godly sorrow,' which expressed itself in mourning and prayer and fasting in private, and in the conventional signs of mourning and in self-humiliation in the congregation."<sup>1</sup> It is only in the councils of the first quarter of the fourth century that the prescribed and graded system of penances (especially in Spain and Asia Minor) comes to light.

Before going on to speak further of earlier "Catholic" discipline, it may be well to state clearly<sup>2</sup> that it was "applicable (*a*) only to grave offences; (*b*) only to open and manifest offences—that is to say, it is only in the case of manifest sins that the Church can take the initiative; with secret sins God Himself deals;<sup>3</sup> and all that the Church can do is through its ministers to admonish and exhort . . . that if any are conscious of grievous sins, they repent, and, if the sins are such as notoriously to require public penance or *exomologesis*,

<sup>1</sup> F. E. Brightman, "Terms of Communion," in *The Early History of the Church and the Ministry*, pp. 358 f., 368.

<sup>2</sup> In Dr. Brightman's words, p. 357.

<sup>3</sup> For the difference of mediæval usage on this point, see the next chapter.

they voluntarily confess and submit themselves to it ; or, if there be any doubt, they make a private confession and receive direction as to whether *exomologesis* is required or not." In any case, " the extreme penalty of excommunication is only to be resorted to after repeated admonition and reproof."

For the third century generally, Tertullian's account of Christian discipline in his *Apology* (c. 39) holds good. In the Church assembly " there are administered exhortations, reproofs, and a divine censorship. For *there* judgment is exercised with a great weight of authority where men are assured that they are in God's sight : and it is a supreme anticipation of the judgment to come, if any have so offended as to be exiled from the fellowship of prayer and assembly and all holy intercourse." The details given in Origen and Cyprian do but fill in the outlines of this picture of the Church's concern to guard its own purity, and bring erring members to a due sense of a repentance for their disloyalty to the way of Christ or the Will of God. But in the Syrian *Didaskalia*, the earliest form of which may come midway between Tertullian and Cyprian, we get a unified picture of the Church engaged in this sacred but delicate duty, and of the procedure therein followed.<sup>1</sup> All that here concerns us, however, are the broad principles of the methods employed, whether more primitive in form and spirit, or more specialised and artificial, as they later became. And all evidence alike points to the seriousness with which the Christian conscience took the Covenant relation to which all forms of discipline were relative, and the moral authority of the corporate consciousness of the Christian Society itself, as expressing the very mind and will of God and of His Christ, in its applications of the principles of the Gospel to actual social duties under current conditions. Bound up with this central matter of moral authority, for the conscience of

<sup>1</sup> See Brightman, as above, pp. 363 ff.

those needing to be disciplined, is the final aspect of the subject ; on which a few words have now to be added.

(c) *The persons responsible*

On the question, " Who were the persons entrusted with the discipline in the Ancient Church ? " the *Didaskalia* gives most valuable evidence : and, if I mistake not, it tends to emphasise the fully corporate nature of its exercise, in keeping with an intense and persistent feeling, down to the fourth century at least, as to *the solidarity of the responsibility* of " the holy Church " for the safeguarding of the purity of its own membership. This was the most characteristic feature, both in idea and practice, of discipline in the Apostolic Church.<sup>1</sup> The essence of its nature and moral sanction was the withdrawal of the religious fellowship, both corporate and individual, of the society of God's holy Family. The sinner felt he had forfeited his right to share its warm, brotherly atmosphere, and its moral support and encouragement in all goodness and purity of living, with a great Hope inspiring all. The contrast of his solitary position, as outside instead of inside the household of Faith and Love, must have been impressive in any case ; but doubly so in the degree to which the solemn act which marked his breach with the sphere of Faith, Love, and Hope—the Christian dynamic for daily conduct—was that of the whole local brotherhood, and not simply of its officers. Now, the *Didaskalia* implies that in the generation after Tertullian the exercise of discipline in North Syria was in a form in

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Didache*, xv, 3 : ' But rebuke one another, not in wrath but in peace, as ye have it in the Gospel ; and with any one that transgresseth against his fellow let no one speak, nor let him hear (a word) from you until he repent ' ; also iv, 3 : ' Thou shalt judge justly, thou shalt not respect persons in rebuking for transgressions.' In this matter of corporate Church discipline the early Congregationalists returned to the ancient model : cf. Robert Browne's *Booke which sheweth the manners of all true Christians* (1589).

which all elements of the Church took an active part—"the whole Church agreeing with one consent," as Origen puts it. The bishop presided as judge-in-chief; the presbyters, the most morally experienced and typical members of the Church, were his assessors; the deacons, as most familiar with the lives of the rank and file, were probably chief witnesses; while the people itself, besides testifying as witnesses, acted as jury upon the question of fact.<sup>1</sup> The bishop, in the end, took the sense of the whole Church thus constituted as a spiritual court of justice (*dikasterion*), and pronounced the decision. In case of guilt, he administered appropriate rebuke for having sullied the fair name of "Christian," and pronounced the solemn sentence of excommunication, temporary or lasting—according to the gravity of the trespass. Thus he acted as the Church's organ in "binding" or "loosing," in the sense of adjudging guilty or cleared from wrong. In the latter case, the accuser, if someone had brought an explicit charge, was liable to judgment for false accusation—one of the graver sins, as equivalent to spiritual homicide of a brother. The corporate sentence in such cases of public discipline must have been overwhelmingly impressive, particularly as Christ, the invisible Head of the Body, was conceived to be participating in the verdict, in keeping with the principle of Matt. xviii. 18, 20; so that, while uttered "on earth," it was valid also "in heaven."

Here we touch the very secret of the possibility of such solemn and effective discipline as marked the whole course of the Ancient Church's life, different as were the forms under which it existed at various stages—more corporate at first, more official and merely

<sup>1</sup> It is true that the *Didaskalia* does not "mention the laity as taking any part in the process." But it seems clearly implied in ii. 47, 49 f., by the use of "you" and "your," especially in 50, 4; and it is expressly asserted by Origen and Cyprian (see Brightman, as above, p. 365; cf. 356 f.).

representative (through bishop and other clergy) later, especially from the fourth century onwards. Yet the formal consent of the whole local Church to the decision of the clergy was still safeguarded, in a perfunctory way: so deeply rooted throughout was the tradition that discipline was really the concern and duty of "the holy Church" itself. All Christians, as such, were not only "priests" but also "Kings unto God," sharers in His prerogative of judgment on moral issues. And their effective participation, in some form, in judging fellow-members, was a fundamental principle of Ancient Church Discipline.

## CHAPTER III

### CHRISTIAN LAW AND DISCIPLINE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

**B**EHIND the Abbot Joachim's crude schematism of religious history which, in its actual form, it must be admitted, too readily invited the condemnation of heresy, there was yet something of real intuition and even of prophecy. Every great religion has its beginning in a period of instinctive and expansive faith which prepares for, and is fulfilled in, a further period of sustained effort to achieve complete organic consistency. This, in its turn, if the religion is possessed of a sufficiently elastic and vigorous life, will be followed by a period during which, now fully assured of its power, it will radiate its spirit throughout the whole range of mundane interests. In the history of Christianity at least these stages of development may, I think, without any undue straining of the facts, be recognised in what may be roughly described as the patristic, the scholastic, and the modern periods. Within each of these periods there was of course growth, and growth of a kind which meant a certain movement away from its own characteristic attitude and towards the attitude which was to succeed it. Yet that each preserved throughout its development its own distinctive quality may be gathered, if from nothing else, at least from the fact that each of the two periods which belong to the historic past ended in a somewhat prolonged moment of hesitation and even apparent exhaustion. It was as though its characteristic impulse had grown languid

through satisfaction, and the new vital need had not yet been able to define itself.

We speak, for instance, of the Dark Ages, just as if their darkness were a kind of natural fact and needed no explanation other than that the sun of Christian thought had temporarily burnt itself out. But the very fact that so brilliant a meteor as John the Scot flashed across their sky ought to have suggested their true character as a period of troubled and anxious groping towards the dawn of a new era of Christian effort and enterprise. Similarly, the revival of Scholasticism, both Catholic and Protestant, in the later sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth was the quite natural, but rather pitiful attempt to renew on a diminished scale, and certainly in a diminished spirit, a work which had been already grandly conceived and massively executed once for all. But from the very midst of these belated and unnecessary labours there emerged the finely historical spirit of the Jesuit Petavius and the Oratorian Thomassin, or again of the Protestant Jean Daillé, to herald and prepare the penetration of a wider world with the essential largeness and fullness of the Christian spirit.

Of these periods thus sharply distinguished, at least at their supreme moments, by their characteristic functions and energies, even though on the actual plane of history shading off into one another through gradations of obscure and doubtful purpose, none is more strictly defined in its historical limits, or, at any rate in the case of its greatest minds, more consciously possessed by a sense of its peculiar mission than the earlier Middle Ages. They belong almost exclusively to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with a slight overflow at either end into the eleventh and the fourteenth. Their mission was to systematise the contents of the Christian faith, to systematise them mainly as truth, as law, and as discipline. From Anselm to Duns Scotus and Roger

Bacon there proceeded the work of systematising Christian doctrine. Gratian's *Decretum*, in the mid year of the twelfth century, represents the most massive attempt both to collect and to reduce to critical order the dispersed treasures of Christian law as then existing. The Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, gave for the first time fixity and universality to the methods of Christian discipline. Only with these last two—law and discipline—have we now to deal. It may be well to consider (1) the conception of Christian law which obtained in our period, (2) its conception of Christian discipline as elucidating the methods used to enforce it, and (3) its attitude towards the world in which that discipline had to be applied.

(a) *The Spiritual basis and aim of Civil Law.*

The conception of Christian law which the mediæval world had inherited may at first sight seem complex, and so indeed superficially it was. Many strands had gone to its making. Yet all these strands were woven of the same substance. That substance was the so-called *Lex Naturæ*, more correctly described perhaps as the *Jus Naturale*. For the conception of the law of nature which the Christian doctors had taken over from the Stoic moralists was not, of course, that of a system of positive law, but rather that of the source from which all positive law derived, and of the criterion by which its validity was tested. The law of nature was, in short, the human reason as directed towards practice, or, more accurately, the first principles of that reason as called forth by and applied to action. Inasmuch as man was by nature and essence a reasonable animal, that law was planted universally in the human heart. Just as man, in that he was man, was possessed of certain principles of reason in virtue of which he was able to pursue and apprehend increasingly speculative truth, so was he possessed of the principles of reason which could recog-

nise and determine what was just in action. Yet it did not of course follow that either in the one case or in the other would man use his reason aright. The individual might fail in particular instances of conduct, or even of the decisions which determined conduct, to recognise the right conclusions to be drawn from the general principles of justice of which he was possessed, just as he might fail to draw true conclusions in some special field of speculative enquiry from the infallible principles of reason of which he was also possessed. Hence the prerogative need of positive law.

Of positive law the Divine law revealed in Holy Scripture was a chief part, and, of course, that part which had ultimate and inclusive authority. The enactments of positive human law were strictly not law at all, but its corruption, in so far as they were out of harmony with the Divine law, or with the law of nature, of which the Divine law was the perfect expression. The Divine law was, indeed, positive law in a supereminent sense, of which we shall have to speak presently. It was something more than the most perfect expression of the law of nature ; but it was at least that, and in being that it was the chief instrument of the discipline of man as a social being. In its commands and prohibitions the code of the perfect human society was formulated. But even within the framework of this code a distinction of value was early recognised and came to be increasingly insisted on. It was the distinction between the law of the Old Testament and that of the New. The old law, as St. Augustine, following the lead of St. Paul, insisted, was carnal, not only in the sense that its commands and prohibitions were directed to things sensible and earthly, but also because its sanctions were sensible and earthly. The desire of reward and the fear of punishment were the motives to which it appealed, and such motives were incapable of bringing the balm of healing to the spirit. Cupidity was the root of all

human evil, and one form of cupidity, as St. Augustine acutely remarked, could not be permanently healed by another, however much higher in quality. The new law appealed to no such motives. It required the love of justice and imparted the power of that love. It promised what St. Thomas called an intellectual and celestial good ; and such good could not be achieved by outward actions which did not themselves express the real desires of the inner life. The old law, therefore, though the goodness which it required was a genuine goodness, was still a law of servitude. The new law, with its requirement of charity—*i.e.* of the love of goodness—was essentially the law of liberty. In it motive and action were one movement of the spirit. Yet the old law was never on this account discarded or superannuated. It was rather taken up into and transformed by the spirit of the new. When St. Augustine, for instance, in his later years, collected in his *Speculum* all the direct commands and prohibitions contained in Holy Scripture for the guidance of the instructors of Christian youth, he seems to make no distinction between the Old Testament and the New. But that is no doubt because he now reads the Old Testament throughout in the spirit of the New. Even it has become transformed so as to be for the Christian a part, and as positive law a necessary part, of the perfect law of liberty.

Thus the law of nature, the law of Moses, and the law of Christ came to be regarded as a hierarchic whole, each stage of which had included, explicated, and completed its predecessor. To this it needs to be added that the *Lex Christi*, as positive law, came to include all the great Church decisions which might be regarded as having ecumenical validity—whether generally accepted patristic interpretations, canons of General Councils, or papal decretals. All these were regarded as decisions procured by the certain operation of that spirit which

imparted itself to the children of the New Covenant as a love of justice, and as necessary guides to them in their translation of that love into positive action.

But there is one other aspect of Christian law as conceived of in the Middle Ages which must be, at least, touched upon before its full majesty can be disclosed. Behind both the law of nature and positive law, whether Divine or human, there lies the eternal law, which is the operative scheme of universal order existing eternally in the Divine Mind. This perfect and immutable plan according to which the Divine Providence works, St. Thomas compares to the idea of the artist or of the artificer of which the work of art, the thing wrought, is the actual expression. Now it is clear that this eternal law, as it exists in the Divine Reason, can be known only to God Himself, or to such beings as have an intuitive knowledge of the content of the Divine Mind. To man it can be known only in its effects, and, therefore, in a piecemeal and fragmentary manner. But it is so known to him. The law of nature is but the irradiation of the human mind by, and its participation in, those principles of the Divine Reason by which it governs and directs the world-elements to their due issue in an order of perfect good. Again the Divine law is the immediate revelation of so much of the eternal law as is necessary for man's active participation in that order. And even positive human law, in so far as it is a true guide to the establishment of the Divine order of justice, and if it is not that it is but the corruption of law, derived directly from the eternal law. Thus all law is directed to a universal end of justice. It strains beyond all that is temporary in satisfaction or interest to the creation of an order which is the eternally satisfying end and purpose of God's providence. It is impossible, surely, to conceive of a more grandiose character and aim for human law than that.

(b) *The special discipline of the Christian life*

From law to discipline there is but a single step, but it is a step which traverses the whole diameter of being. Law is of the universal. It deals with a universal order, it points to a universal end. Discipline is and can be only of the individual. It is the distinction of Christianity, and especially of mediæval Christianity, that it swings lightly between these two poles. No sooner has it affirmed the law in its utmost generality of character and purpose than it turns to shape the individual in whom alone the law can become incarnate. All that lies between, all the intermediate steps and stages, are but of small account for it. It is not that it altogether overlooks either the existence or the necessity of those stages. It is rather that in them, taken by themselves, there is and can be no ultimate achievement. In a mundane society the eternal law may indeed be particularised. Something of its universal principles may be applicable and may actually be applied to this or that particular end. But it is particularised so as to lose its universality of reference. In the individual alone the law is capable of being particularised so as to lose nothing of its universality. Not the city but the citizen counts eternally, is capable of eternal life. Society, indeed, is the ultimate goal of all endeavour, but it is the society of holy souls. The society not so formed is not even contributory to the Kingdom of God. It is in St. Augustine's phrase but a *magnum latrocinium*, a larger robber-horde. The Kingdom of God is a product not of development but of endeavour, of the intensest spiritual endeavour. I do not suppose that the great mediæval thinkers were altogether blind to a certain disciplinary value for the human spirit in the organisation and claims of mundane societies. But such recognition as there is of such value is faint and intermittent and almost apologetic. They dealt in

absolutes, the perfectly holy society and the individual called by grace to share in that perfection.

Discipline was just the total training necessary to the acquirement of that perfection. It consisted of knowledge and self-mastery, the increasing knowledge of the will of God, and the growing mastery of the diseased and corrupted self which interfered with that knowledge. The monastic rule alone fulfilled the terms of that discipline in making it voluntary, continuous, and sufficiently rigorous for the due achievement of its purpose. It was, therefore, naturally enough, the experience of the monastic life that fixed the methods of discipline as self-mastery which finally prevailed in mediæval Christendom. The earlier forms of discipline had dealt only with cases of open and grievous sin, and had dealt with them in the one way of excluding the sinner from the communion of the faithful, and of subjecting him to penances of a certain duration and a certain rigour proportionate to the greatness of his offence. But the more continuously exacting service of God required by the monastic rule soon revealed the danger to the spiritual life of those sins of disposition and temper which were not visited by definite canonical penalties and the equal danger of a general spiritual habit of slackness. With these subtler forms of sin it was necessary to deal if the monastic life was to be kept at all true to its ideal. The method of dealing with them which at first obtained was of the nature of that which came to be known later as spiritual direction. That is to say, it was not regarded as a formal exercise of the Church's commission to bind and loose, but rather as a special guidance of the soul according to its individual need and temperament in its effort to live the integral Christian life. But very soon these sins revealed through the intensity of the cloistered life came to be catalogued and to be assigned their due measure of satisfaction or penance. Among the eight

“ principal vices which infest human life ” enumerated by St. John Cassian, four at least are sins of temperament or habit—gloom, accidie, or moroseness, vainglory, and pride, while two others,—avarice and anger—though occasioned by outward things, are also diseases or perverted states of the inner life. This enumeration of Cassian’s became classical at a later time, especially from the ninth century onwards, and it is with sins of this kind, as well, of course, as with grosser sins, that the books known as *Penitentials* deal. To Cassian too may be traced perhaps the first clear recognition of the value of private confession as a relief to the burdened soul, as distinguished from that private or public confession which seems to have been the customary preparation for the sacrament of public penance. The *Penitentials*, therefore, were unauthorised manuals of spiritual direction which had grown up spontaneously to meet the needs of the life of devotion in the cloister. It was in the Irish monasteries that they made their first appearance, and from them their influence rapidly spread into all the lands evangelised by the Irish monks. But further, in this process of evangelisation, or, in the case of lands already evangelised, of religious revival, the disciplinary system of the *Penitentials* was transferred from the cloister to the general body of Christians living in the world. Thus throughout the northern lands, in England, in Burgundy, and the other Frankish lands of the ancient Gaul, and in Germany, the Christian life was formed by a discipline which, south of the Alps, was as yet unknown, save in the region immediately influenced by the Irish monastery of Bobbio. Church authority as yet knew no other method of religious discipline than the ancient method of public penance, which meant that all those whose lives were free from the brand of notorious and public sin escaped its searching and healing power. But not only was the new system unauthorised, it was also formally condemned,

and that repeatedly, by decisions of the highest authority. Thus the great provincial Councils which were held by order of Charlemagne in the four chief cities of the Empire at the beginning of the ninth century condemned, with varying degrees of rigour, the use of the Penitential books. And, of course, their use was still more rigorously condemned by the supreme authority at Rome. Yet the old system was in fact already doomed. Its excessive severity, a severity so excessive as to compel quite generally alleviations of various kinds which compromised both its dignity and effectiveness, the obvious fatuity from a religious point of view of its distinctions between public and private sins, the fact that it failed necessarily to guide the conscience in just those cases in which it would have been most perplexed, perhaps also some dawning recognition of the baffling contrast between the external character of its sanctions and punishments and the essential character and aims of the new law so wholly concerned with the inner motions of the spirit, all these had been for long conspiring to discredit the traditional system of discipline in spite of its recognition by authority. Even where the old discipline was still generally observed as representing the formal sacrament of penance, there was a tendency for the new system to be adopted by its side as a useful aid towards an earnest and conscientious Christian life. Confession had proved itself to be the healing medicine which Cassian had so strongly felt it could be. It is indeed true that as late as the middle of the twelfth century so great an authority as Gratian could still refuse to pronounce that confession to a priest was necessary to a true penitence, could hold that the sufficiency of confession to God was supported by at least an equal weight of authority. None the less, the triumph of the system which the Penitentials had first popularised was already on the point of being declared. In the year 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council

enjoined it upon all the faithful, as henceforward the only authoritative form of the sacrament of penance.

(c) *The Christian's place in the world order*

It remains to consider the mediæval attitude towards the world of social relationships in which man found himself, and the effect upon that world of the life formed by the Christian discipline. As has been hinted already, the mediæval theologian made little account of these relationships. For him the citizenship of the Christian was in heaven. When Christ, says St. Thomas, placed in the forefront of His Gospel the announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, He inaugurated the new law which was directed solely to the attainment of "an intelligible and heavenly good," in contradistinction to Moses who introduced the old law by the promise of the Land of Canaan, "a sensible and earthly good." In no earthly kingdom had those who were called to the obedience of the new law an abiding part. In the institutions of none of them, in no distinctions which they established or sanctioned, had the Christian an abiding interest. Under the new law the inequalities which accidentally existed amongst men were abolished as something contrary to the law of nature itself. Private property might be tolerated as one of those evil results of man's fallen nature which served to restrain still greater evils, but even so it was tolerable for the true Christian only in so far as he made it an instrument of something like communism in use. The genuinely Christian attitude towards the things of the world was to be found in its nearest possible approach to perfection only in the life of the cloister, and even in that life only at its moments of greatest and purest zeal.

But the world was there, and most Christians had to live in it. There the Christian ideal was forced to an accommodation, and it is the nature of that accommodation which it is most important for the Christian of

to-day to scrutinise and if possible understand. But first of all it was not a mere accommodation. There were elements in the world which, even for the mediæval Christian theory, had a positive value. There was notably the long achievement of the human reason. For reason was for the mediæval theologian man's point of most authentic contact with the Divine nature, and it was that faculty of human nature which had been least decayed by the Fall. So the schoolman had quite outgrown the unworthy fears of an ageing Jerome or Augustine that they might have drunk too deep of the waters of pagan learning. For St. Thomas Aristotle was, without any question or pious hesitation, the master of the human reason. Roger Bacon could exclaim with a daring which probably did not seem at all daring to his contemporaries: "How strange it is that we Christians are beyond all comparison more imperfect in morals than the heathen philosophers. Read the ten books of Aristotle's Ethics, the innumerable works of Seneca, Cicero, and the rest, and you will find that we are sunk in an abyss of vices so that we can only say, 'The grace of God has saved us.' There is among those philosophers a burning zeal for chastity, clemency, patience, constancy, and all the virtues."

But in the world of practical affairs also mediæval theology admitted the presence of a certain positive value in so far as order was the aim and motive of human government. Order, the order of justice, was the supreme end of the Divine government, and hence there was a certain tendency among mediæval theologians to identify somewhat summarily order and justice. Justice of course alone could procure a genuine order, and manifest injustice, however passively submitted to for the moment, was of itself disorder and the inevitable parent of further disorder. But order was in itself a good, and the force which honestly sought and procured it was thereby legitimised, even if in its origin of some-

what doubtful right. Beneficent force, like property, was one of the results of man's fallen nature which restrained greater evils and thereby, in some sense, constituted a good. Hence, naturally, the Church itself in the person of the Pope claimed the rôle of supreme overlord of all Christendom, and was supported in this claim by the practically universal consent of the Canonists. That the spiritual chief of Christendom should also be the ultimate director and reviser of its temporal policy, its supreme court of appeal, seemed to mediæval logic inevitable, seeing that the function of the temporal ruler was to procure that order which was itself a spiritual end, the pale reflection of the inclusive end of the Divine government. And just in proportion as the earthly monarchies were many, and as the order which each procured might at any moment find itself in rivalry and even conflict with other partial orders, was there the greater need of an ultimate authority representing the Divine order. Even within the Empire, the theoretical *universitas* of Christian rule and policy in things temporal, there would necessarily be, as in fact there had been continually, occasions of conflict which only a power representing the Divine order of justice could hope to resolve. But the Empire itself was a sun which had many minor satellites, France, England, the petty monarchies of the Spanish peninsula, the Magyar and Slavic states of the Eastern March. The papacy, if it were to honour the terms of its Divine commission in even the least satisfactory degree, must seek to hold all these centrifugal units of barbaric force within the ambit of the Divine justice which it represented. Hence its unyielding struggle with the Empire for the acknowledged right to temporal supremacy. Hence the attempt, an attempt which in all cases met with at least temporary success, to wrest from the satellite states an acknowledgement of immediate vassalage to itself.

If, therefore, the Church deliberately inserted itself into the complex and morally compromising scheme of world affairs, its point of insertion was determined by its own theory of the Divine nature and action. God was supremely the Providence which directed all things to an ordered end of justice, and directed them thus in conformity with a plan inherent in His own reason which was His essence. The characteristic function, therefore, of His representative in the mundane sphere was the function of government. Only by exercising it with unwearied patience and determination could the Church of God fulfil its mission adequately. It is the supreme distinction of what Baron Friedrich von Hügel has happily called the Golden Middle Ages as contrasted with the later mediæval period of disintegration and decay—roughly from the middle of the eleventh to the middle of the thirteenth century—that they clearly conceived of and laboured unceasingly to give effect to the ideal of a single Christian civilisation, clothing in world-substance the nature of the Divine justice and reason, *i.e.*, the very nature of God.

The fate of that attempt to realise the great ideal was the fate of all such attempts in human history. That is to say, its measure of success which was real was counterbalanced by the gradual clogging and general wearing out of the instrument. The Church became unduly subdued to what it worked in. Besides, the papacy in the period of its great enterprise of temporal government was bound to the feudal system of order, a system which had passed its summit of power and was already sinking towards decay. True, there was nothing of which mediæval theology was more profoundly aware than that the form of this world passeth away. But its mode of thought was too absolute to lead it to add its *forms* also. Not only did it not perceive the value of change in the processes

of vital development, but it had a radical suspicion and fear of change. Its conception of order was limited to the perfect adjustment of forms in their actual fixity to the discharge of their due functions. That was its chief weakness. But its strength, a strength whose fine and beneficent quality cannot be overrated, was that it believed in social justice and ensued it with all its might. The moulds in which it sought to run it were unequal to its reception. The methods which it employed to establish it were defective and often self-defeating. Its nearer outlook upon the world was short-sighted and rendered a distorted image of that world. But its ultimate inspiration and vision were magnificently noble and true, and, therefore, they remain. Its methods could not be ours even if we perversely tried to recover them. They belonged to and arose out of a world which has for ever passed away. But the inspiration and the vision we can make our own if only we are found worthy to receive them. And in their power we can resume the task which it laid down in a new world by new methods arising out of and adapted to its conditions, both material and moral.

One word more needs here to be added. It was no mere accident of history that the same pontificate in which the great spiritual enterprise of the mediæval papacy reached its highest moment of success was that which gave also to the Church of the West its settled method of spiritual discipline. Without that discipline it could never have achieved the measure of success it did in fact achieve. It was necessary then, as now, regularly to strip men spiritually naked and to place them thus in the presence of God to render to Him due account of their deeds. That is the essence of spiritual discipline always, and however its methods may need revision it is certain that without it men will never be equal to working the works of God.

*(d) Christian direction in commerce and industry*

In summing up the above review of how law was conceived and ecclesiastical discipline conceived and practised throughout the mediæval period, I have indicated that it is rather in its abundantly Christian inspiration than in any detail of its practice that we may still find a source upon which to draw for our guidance in matters of social morals. To many the conclusion will seem somewhat lame and disappointing. None the less it is a conclusion supported by facts which are deeply rooted in Christian history. Foremost among such facts is the traditional Christian attitude towards the world of commerce and industry.

It is only during the present generation that, even in the most advanced countries of the Old World, the last remains of a prejudice which depreciated trade at the expense of the so-called liberal professions have finally disappeared. In its fully secularised form, this prejudice had become nothing more than a peculiarly objectionable instance of vulgar snobbery. But it had its roots in a long religious past. The monastic conception of work was the discipline of the spirit through bodily activities. But the only activities of this kind to which it was willing to concede a fully disciplinary character were such as were necessary to provide for men's bodily necessities—viz., agriculture and the manual crafts. Even the Lutheran doctrine of the secular calling, as for each the Divinely-appointed form and order of service, did no more than extend this conception, with its actual limitations, from the discipline of the cloister to that of ordinary life. Calvinism, on the other hand, definitely admitted commerce to the rank of a fully Christian occupation, and its example was followed even more ungrudgingly by the independent sects which in England and America issued from the Reformed as distinct from the Lutheran

type of Protestantism. But Catholic Christianity never quite overcame its difficulty in recognising commerce as such a necessary and beneficent function of man's social life as would entitle it to rank among fully Christian forms of work. As a mere interchange of products, and, especially in the early stages of its development, a provision for debasing luxuries rather than vital necessities, it remained for long under the definite ban of Christian morals, and was only gradually and grudgingly admitted within its purview.

Even when, as a result of the Crusades, Venice and the other Mediterranean ports did at last become centres of a long-distance trade, there was hardly any perceptible widening of the interests of Christian morality in response to the new situation. There was indeed the ever-renewed insistence upon the Christian doctrine of usury, and the gradual amelioration of that doctrine which we owe to the later Schoolmen. But the more immediately important and influential doctrine of the "just price" was due not at all to any development of long-distance trade, but (with a practical exclusiveness) to the local interchange of the products of agriculture and the handicrafts. Too much importance can hardly be attached to the admirable spirit of that doctrine; but it is difficult to see how its detailed application can help us in the vastly altered economic circumstances of to-day. It was something to have impressed upon the mind and conscience of buyer and seller alike that the transactions in which they engaged were an instance of that justice which was required of them by the Law of Nature, *i.e.*, by the Law of God present to their own natural reason. It was a very great something to believe, and to have succeeded in making men generally believe, that value was somehow inherent in the article bought or sold, and that the price demanded and given ought to correspond as nearly as possible with that

value. But even in the Middle Ages when *quanta* both of labour and products were practically fixed, when the fluctuation both of demand and supply was of the slightest, it was not always easy to apply that doctrine with more than an approach to the justice it required.

Where, for instance, was the authority sufficient to determine in all cases what the just price of an article was? It was held that common estimation, the generally agreed opinion of the community, was such an authority. And where common estimation was expressed in civil law or in guild rules, it did no doubt assess with a general accuracy the just value of most commodities. But it was always possible that the civil law should fix a price which was not just, and which both buyer and seller knew to be unjust, and in such cases it was expressly provided that they were bound to conduct their transactions on the basis of their own more accurate knowledge of what was just. The assumption of a possibly superior knowledge of the just price on the part of the individual buyer and seller is quite in line with that other mediæval teaching, that where the civil law plainly contradicted the Law of Nature it was the duty of the citizen illuminated by the light of natural reason to disobey it. In both cases the appeal to conscience, and the assumption that natural reason even in the individual may guide aright where common estimation expressed in civil law has been false to the claims of justice, are splendid witnesses to what was finest in the mediæval conception of human nature. But it must be admitted that confidence in the existence of an authority sufficient to determine, or rather I ought to say to recognise, the just price, is thereby hardly strengthened.

It remains, however, that the civil law was recognised as this authority by the general Christian conscience. And two facts must have contributed in large measure

to make it in some degree equal to its duty. The first is that the civil State knew what was expected of it, that at its best it recognised its function as an instrument of the Christian conscience and of Divine Law as promulgated in the Law of Nature. The second is that during the whole of the mediæval period the State was in fact regarded as but the secular aspect of the one Christian Republic. It might clamour and intrigue for independence of ecclesiastical control, but it did so with an evil, or at least a very doubtful, conscience. Its place and function within the Christian commonwealth required of it a constant watchfulness to honour Christian standards of morality in its legislation. These considerations ought not to be pressed overmuch, for they were continually being resisted by the growing pressure of secular claims, such as those of commerce, of which at least in their actual complexity the Church was hardly aware, and which in so far as it was aware of them it deeply suspected. But till the full triumph of the Renaissance they never wholly ceased to operate ; and to their operation was due whatever measure of fidelity to the doctrine of the just price the civil law evinced. And it must be remembered that, subject to the consideration I have mentioned, the authority of the civil law was supreme in this sphere. I cannot remember an instance of the interference of Canon Law in the matter of the just price, as it did most definitely interfere with the permission of usury by the Civil Law.

But throughout the later stages of the mediæval period the national States were asserting their independence of ecclesiastical authority with a growing confidence of their right to do so, until by the end of the sixteenth century that independence was generally acknowledged by the theologians themselves, and in the interests of a more effective assertion of papal power. A theologian, for instance, so sanely traditional as

Suarez, in the very first year of the seventeenth century, affirmed the complete independence of the secular State in all purely secular affairs, in which he definitely included the fixing of prices. He holds, of course, as did all his scholastic predecessors, that the civil legislation cannot promulgate any statute which is a direct violation of the Law of Nature. But on the other hand, he distinguishes between laws which, as positive commands, would directly violate the Law of Nature, and laws which in certain instances permit such violations. "It is one thing," he says, "positively to command injustice; it is another to permit it, or to refrain from punishing it, or even to fail to undo the evil that has been done." It is the province of the civil law, he holds, to legislate for the common good of men in society; and therefore its commands and prohibitions must deal exclusively with such actions as are absolutely necessary to the maintenance and promotion of the common good, and as are within the ordinary moral capacity of all citizens. And he expressly instances, as one of the things which the civil law may not prohibit, the sale of goods at a higher price than their real value, provided that the surcharge does not exceed fifty per cent. Here evidently Suarez has in mind a limit in the matter of prices which was recognised in the Spain of Philip II or of his successor Philip III. It is evident, too, that the Church had lost the power and even the will to enforce the full rigour of the mediæval doctrine of the just price. It had no doubt become aware, among other things, that the problem had grown to be much too complex for its direct handling.

As to the prohibition of usury, less needs to be said. It was the growth of large-scale and long-distance trade that revived in the alarmed minds of theologians the ancient Christian prohibition of any charge for the use of money. Commerce seemed to the Christian

theologian to be the most morally dangerous of human occupations, at once issuing from and fostering that worst and most insidious of all human vices, cupidity. But commerce had come to stay, and gradually Christian theology, in spite of its well-grounded prejudice, was forced to discover or devise means of relaxing the rigour of its traditional attitude. St. Thomas had already recognised a case in which plain justice required that the lender should receive more than the amount of his original loan, viz., where he had incurred some clear and positive loss as a result of the loan. For such loss, where it could be clearly established, some adequate compensation was due. There was obviously little difficulty for theologians in admitting the case. But it was quite another matter when the case was extended to include a claim for compensation on account of the cessation of gain to the lender by reason of his loan. So closely did this claim border upon usury proper that it was very slowly and grudgingly allowed. And where it was allowed, the face of the old doctrine was saved by the device of a short time-limit during which no interest could be charged, but beyond which the lender was to be compensated for the cessation of his gains. By the end of the fifteenth century this modified doctrine of usury held the field. That does not mean, however, that the letter of the old doctrine was abandoned, or even that the ordinary theologian not directly interested in these matters was aware of its serious modification.

It is hardly possible, I think, to miss the lesson of this brief historical survey. The self-centring tendencies of man are not easily reprovèd or corrected. They manifest themselves just as much, or even more, in his most feverish activities as in his bovine satisfaction with a life of ease and comfort. And they can never in any society be effectively countered, they have never in fact been so countered and overcome, other-

wise than by the action of a powerful religious idea universally accepted and honoured throughout that society. That was the strength of the early Middle Ages. That was the strength of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Mr. Keynes again has done us a real service in recognising for himself and helping us to recognise that the real strength of Soviet Russia lies in its ascetic subordination of all other interests to the triumph of its " religion " of atheist materialism. Can and will Christianity in its present state of material division and moral flaccidity or dispersiveness call down upon its altars the consuming flame in which a new and satisfying human order may be forged ? That is the question which, in face of an imperious and insistent challenge from outside, this generation of Christians has to answer, not in theory but in practice.

## CHAPTER IV

### POST-REFORMATION DIRECTION AND DISCIPLINE IN THE NON-EPISCOPAL CHURCHES

IT has been frequently affirmed that Church discipline disappeared with the Reformation, and the actual condition of discipline since the seventeenth century helped, perhaps, to explain this impression. Thus Alexander Vinet, lecturing at Lausanne in 1840, stated that "the word *discipline* had almost lost its meaning in our ecclesiastical institutions."<sup>1</sup>

Earlier,<sup>2</sup> in a *Free Address to Protestant Dissenters on the Subject of Church Discipline*, Dr. Joseph Priestly observed that "it is obvious that originally the Christian Churches were particularly distinguished by the vigour of their discipline . . . : it is not less obvious that there is hardly the face of anything that can be called discipline among us."<sup>3</sup> Yet, in fact, both personal and social discipline remained a reality long after the Reformation.

#### (a) *Personal Direction and Discipline in the Modern Period*

All the Reformed Churches made attempts to revert to the methods of the Primitive Christian Church in discipline. Luther, it is true, never himself worked out any system of discipline, but THE LUTHERAN CHURCH retained an annual confessional, and the minor excom-

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Pastoral Theology*, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> In 1770.

<sup>3</sup> *Free Address*, p. 25.

munication, to be used for the protection of the Lord's Table against manifest sinners.<sup>1</sup> As the State Church it exercised jurisdiction, through the civil power, over both religion and education. The Lutheran discipline was consistorial, not congregational. A movement in the seventeenth century to establish a complete system of church discipline for Lutheranism, led by J. A. Andreae and others, had little result.

It was JOHN CALVIN who founded a new system of ecclesiastical discipline, a system which ultimately extended to Holland, Scotland, France (among the Huguenots), England, and America. Instituted and elaborated at Geneva, it was administered for twenty years through a College of Pastors and Doctors (or Elders) at a weekly Consistorial Court, the civil power occupying the place of the bishop. In harmony with his maxim that "no house could be preserved in a proper condition without discipline," Calvin divided the city into twelve districts, with an Elder to oversee each section. Life was regulated in its minutest details—men, women, and children, alike were the subjects of it. The penalties for serious offences included imprisonment, excommunication, banishment, and even death. Education, however, was well cared for, schools and academies were provided.

This Presbyterian system of discipline obtained for a short time in England, while in Scotland it prevailed down to the last century, though in a modified form.

IN ENGLAND the Westminster Assembly, in its *Book of Common Order* and the *First Book of Discipline*, as well as in its *Form of Government and Directory of Worship*, stated at length the rules of judicature and trial. The State was to punish certain classes of religious offences, and the Church was to maintain strict supervision over the lives of church members. A rigorous system of censures was elaborated. As Neal remarks, "the

<sup>1</sup> See Schmalkald Articles, iii. 9; Augsburg Conf., Pt. ii. Art. 7.

English Puritans held that the Elders, joined with the ministers, should be the overseers of the manners and conversation of all the congregation.”<sup>1</sup> All the early Puritans or Presbyterians constituted their churches upon this plan.

Dr. Priestley said that historically the Presbyterians of England allowed the government of their churches to fall gradually into the hands of the minister, with disaster to discipline; for “to admonish, reprove, comfort, and advise needs more than one man.”<sup>2</sup> In the seventeenth century, certainly, Presbyteries consisted of ministers, elders, and deacons. The complete system was to work through four courts—the Parish Presbytery, the “Classis” or Classical Presbytery, the Provincial Synod, and the General Assembly. The General Assembly never met in England, and only two Provincial Synods are known—one in London and another in Lancashire. The London Provincial Synod comprised thirteen “Classes,” each consisting of a number of parish presbyteries. The “Classis,” amongst other functions, administered Church discipline. The procedure was, first, admonition of an offender, next, suspension, and finally, excommunication. From penitent “notorious offenders” it demanded public confession. The impenitent were cut off from the Lord’s Table and from the baptism of their children. This latter point is significant, bearing upon the social conception of Christian life as a life within the sphere of a special “Covenant,” as in the primitive Church.

It is now known that the “Classis” prevailed under the Commonwealth throughout Somerset, Dorset, Berks and Derbyshire.<sup>3</sup> In Derbyshire it was established in each of its six Hundreds. Dr. Charles Cox in 1880 discovered the Minute Book of the Wirksworth Classis for

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Puritans*, i. p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> *Free Address*, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Derbyshire Archæological Society’s *Proceedings*. Dr. C. S. Cox, vol. ii. (1880).

1651-1658, a solitary Derbyshire survivor.<sup>1</sup> It contains ninety-four pages of well-kept Minutes. This Classis met monthly, and each time elected a Moderator from the ministers present. It then proceeded to despatch Church business, listen to complaints, and hear charges. Ministers, in 1652 and later, came under "gentle reproof" for neglect in securing certificates from their parish presbyteries attesting the fitness of members for Holy Communion. Marriage with cousins-german was also a matter of inquiry, and was pronounced "lawful but not expedient." In 1657 Robert Hover was tried for "causing scandals" by a special committee of ministers and elders, and was exonerated. Towards the end of the period the laity grew lax in attendance, as Presbyterianism waned before Independency.

It was in Scotland especially that Presbyterianism won its most lasting triumphs, and, under JOHN KNOX, attained its strictest development. In 1559 Knox's *Order of Excommunication and Public Repentance* was enrolled among the statutes of the realm and printed at the command of the General Assembly. *The First Book of Discipline* of 1560 had provided a form and order of discipline even more elaborate than that imported from Geneva. *The Second Book of Discipline* of 1578 became the basis of the constitution of the Church of Scotland in 1592 and later. These two Books of Discipline are still in theory the standards for the Presbyterian system of Church discipline in Scotland.

THE INDEPENDENTS AND BAPTISTS of the seventeenth century stood for the autonomy of each separate Church. Self-government was to be complete, no ecclesiastical authority outside itself was recognised. Even within each Church, authority was not delegated

<sup>1</sup> A copy of the Minute Book of the Manchester Classis is preserved in the Chetham Library, Manchester. The original is at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, Manchester. There is also in existence a copy of the Minute Book of the Bolton Classis.

to a few, or to a representative court, but was wielded directly by "the whole body of believers," the members of the local Church. This extended to discipline. The Pastor and Deacons might make private or preliminary investigation or examination, they might serve as a court or committee for arriving at the truth or the facts; but the only court which could try and decide upon cases of discipline was that of the whole congregation of the adult faithful duly assembled for the purpose. This court alone could exonerate or admonish or sentence, and from its decision there was no appeal. This *congregational* type of discipline distinguished both Independents and Baptists from Anglicans and Presbyterians, and still distinguishes them. The subject-matter of discipline, of course, remained the same in all the reformed Churches, viz., the maintenance of the Christian standard of life, conduct, and consistency, of theological orthodoxy and of religious practice. The Congregational discipline tended however, at first, to a stricter control over the spiritual life of the individual than was the case with the other Schools of Reformed discipline.

It was this type of discipline which was carried by the Pilgrim Fathers to New England, and there so rigidly administered, not only by the separate Churches, but also by the Puritan magistrates as part of the civil order. Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* is an imaginative rendering of its drastic operations.

In the eighteenth century Dr. Priestley was critical of it. He complained that "the immediate object of the Independents is two-fold: perfect uniformity in matters of faith and in the religion of the heart. The latter a very improper subject for human judicature; all that man can be proper judges of is the outward propriety and regularity of behaviour. Their sole system of discipline has no countenance in our only Rule of Faith and Duty. Better have no discipline at all, than that

of the Independents.”<sup>1</sup> He further deplored the decline of discipline amongst the “rational Dissenters,” *i.e.*, the Unitarians or old English Presbyterians. He declared that “nothing has taken place that can make us consider the business of friendly advice, admonition, censure, and rejection to be less necessary in the Christian Church.”<sup>2</sup> He finally suggested a system of discipline for his own denomination which combined features of both the Presbyterian and the Congregational types of discipline.

Thus Congregational church discipline is, broadly speaking, democratic—it proceeds from the whole congregation of the faithful. Presbyterian church discipline is, rather, republican—it operates through courts of official representatives. Anglican church discipline might with the same rough approximation be described as monarchical in method—it operates through the Consistorial Courts of Bishops and Archbishops, and, being that of an Established Church, is both ecclesiastical and civil.

Modern Church History thus gives evidence of a serious, and for long a successful, effort to revive the spiritual and moral discipline of the primitive Christian Church. That effort still proceeds to a certain degree, especially in some Reformed Communion.

A notable instance is that of the SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, which combines the Congregational and Presbyterian types of discipline and adds other features. From George Fox’s time to the present, the function of its Monthly Meeting has been “to oversee, exhort, reprove, and, after long-suffering and waiting upon the disobedient and refractory, to *disown* them as any more of their communion.”<sup>3</sup> At this Meeting a series of questions has to be answered regarding the character and conduct of the members. Materials for this are

<sup>1</sup> *Free Address*, pp. 35, 40, 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Penn’s Introduction to *Fox’s Journal*.

secured at the *Preparative Meeting*, which consists of at least two members of each sex. A distinct sphere in discipline is assigned to women Friends whereby they exercise authority over women members. If, after advice, tender admonition, and warning, the Monthly Meeting is obliged to disown a member, special pains are taken to record the fact, as a testimony to their care for the honour of the truth they profess. The results of the Monthly Meeting are reported to the Quarterly Meeting, and, if necessary, to the Yearly Meeting.<sup>1</sup>

The Friends' discipline to-day moves less in the direction of moral coercion. Principal Graham holds that the eighteenth-century discipline of the Friends was without sufficient trust in the individual. It covered such matters as marriage, dress, speech, furniture, food, and amusements; also smuggling, wrong speculation, bankruptcy, wealth-accumulation, slavery, and, notably, war.

Dr. Priestley maintained in the eighteenth century that "but for their discipline the Friends and the Methodists would decay and be extinct in a very short time."<sup>2</sup>

The Church discipline of THE PEOPLE CALLED METHODISTS contains both Quaker and Presbyterian elements—much of the spirit and manner of the former, and of the form of the latter. Its method is the elucidation of facts and of truth by question and answer, the interrogation of the Christian conscience. The form or order is trial through graded Church courts. The stamp of the ethical temper, the rigidity of habit, and of the organising genius of John Wesley is everywhere evident in Methodist Church discipline. Wesley's *Journals* reveal the fact that he retained the discipline of the first Methodist societies largely in his own hands.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Book of Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends*.

<sup>2</sup> *Free Address*, p. 129.

He subdivided them into small classes, each with a wise and devout leader. Periodically he visited and purged them.<sup>1</sup>

The Rules of 1743 state in detail the conditions of membership, under the heads of "doing no harm," "doing good," and "attending on all the ordinances of God." These rules forbid gross sins by name, the using many words in buying and selling, taking unlawful interest, putting on costly apparel, unchristian diversions, "laying up treasures on earth," and borrowing without prospect of repayment. Little ethical progress or change has taken place in the nature of the directions and rules: but cases of discipline, both amongst ministers and members, have greatly declined in numbers during the last half-century. Gross offences are now very rare. The more spiritual and subjective sins and errors are to-day dealt with chiefly by direction in public and private: more also is left to the dictates of an enlightened Christian conscience. Trust is now mostly in self-discipline.

*(b) Social Direction and Discipline in the Modern Period*

It would not be just to ignore the attention given in Post-Reformation direction and discipline to social affairs. It may not have been adequate, but it has not been wholly lacking.

The earliest and most definite social direction and discipline given and maintained was that of JOHN CALVIN. There is little doubt that he did much to create a new era in European society. The social and economic results of his influence have been, for weal or woe, enormous. Reformed religion, he held, must work itself out in the social, business, and political life of the people. Its stamp should be upon the collective

<sup>1</sup> See *Journals* for March, 1741; March, 1743, and June, 1759.

life of the community. He was the first to use the Scriptures as a text-book of sociology as well as of theology. He taught that, upon Protestant principles, the individual should be subordinated to the well-being of the theocratic State. He was pre-eminent as a social legislator. It was he really, in a new world where the need for capital in commerce was increasing, who changed Christian practice in relation to interest. He gave also clear warning as to its perils. He removed it from the category of "usury," in the sense of ruthless greed. He regarded it as a lawful and socially serviceable commercial act. He made work incumbent, and, where necessary, saw that it was provided. Neither indolence nor frivolity was tolerated in Geneva.

Calvin's teaching and discipline historically led to the creation of capital upon a larger scale. It made possible the system of modern industry and commerce. "It was Calvin who first taught the religious duty of saving on an intensive scale. Through him thrift became a Christian virtue. Capital arose out of systematic self-denial and self-discipline. It was accompanied by a readiness and range of public service which has seldom been equalled."<sup>1</sup> Selfish economic Individualism, which soon arose, is a base-born thing. It is not the legitimate product of Protestantism. It is Capitalism escaping Christian discipline and control. The early Puritans and the later Calvinistic Churches sanctioned no such thing as conscienceless and irresponsible individualism. It came into existence despite their warnings. Yet they undoubtedly created the means for its use and laid them ready to its hand. The virtues they developed—industry, sobriety, trustworthiness, uprightness, thrift—made possible the means for an unworthy as well as a worthy use of the

<sup>1</sup> Archdeacon A. L. Lilley's 1924 *Charge*, p. 8. See also Dr. Forsyth's *Contemporary Review*, July, 1910, pp. 77 and 78 and Dr. E. Troeltsch's *Protestantism and Progress*, p. 139.

new opportunities for the acquisition of material wealth.

In Scotland, JOHN KNOX, in his *Book of Discipline* (1560), propounded a splendid programme of social reform—work for all, maintenance for all, education for all. Much of his social teaching was incorporated in the discipline of the Scottish Churches. The following is just one specimen of it: "Oppression of the poore by exactions, deceaving of thame in buyinge or sellinge by wrang met or measure,"<sup>1</sup> are to be visited with ecclesiastical punishment.

In England, in the seventeenth century, RICHARD BAXTER (1615-91), in his *Christian Directory* and other works, applied Christianity to commercial life. He allows interest with Calvin, but it is not to be made a first charge on industry. He states the Christian ethic of price, of work, of tenancy-rents, of land-ownership, and of wealth in general. "He had no quarrel with the exercise of public authority to establish a fair price for necessaries, and he refused to sanction the sacrifice of moral considerations to the tender mercies of the forces of supply and demand."<sup>2</sup> Baxter also contributed to Christian Casuistry.<sup>3</sup> In his attitude he represented seventeenth-century Christianity, both Puritan and Anglican. Calvin had his Geneva, Baxter had his Kidderminster.

The most thorough-going and adventurous attempts, however, to exercise a radical Christian social discipline were those of such post-Reformation sects as the Ana-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Property : its Duties and Rights*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> H. G. Wood in *Property*, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Carveth Read, in his *Natural and Social Morals* (pp. 100-101), affirms that "the mercenary abuse of Casuistry has discredited it—everyone knows Pascal's *Provincial Letters*—but Casuistry is an essential part of moral science, for without it there is no name for any vice or virtue that can be comprehensively understood, no public guidance for anyone who feels his conscience is baffled, no definite public standard of behaviour." He then proceeds to commend for the purpose Henry Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*, Book iii.

baptists, Bohemian Brethren, Mennonites, and others of the sixteenth century, the Levellers, the Diggers, and the early Quakers of the seventeenth, and the Herrnhuters and others of the eighteenth century. These formed themselves into communistic societies and enforced a drastic discipline upon every member in relation to labour, the distribution of the product, private property, the payment of taxes, marriage, the social education of children, and, in some instances, in relation to war and military service. Whatever the extravagances of some of them, these small communities and sects are noteworthy for the fact that they sought to give social and economic expression to the Christian ethic in their life and discipline, and to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. However fanatical and even mistaken they often were, they at least "preserved belief in a new social order, the conviction that society is to be remodelled as a Christian brotherhood."<sup>1</sup>

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, from the first, embodied the Christian social ethic in their direction and discipline. George Fox, William Penn, John Bellers, John Woolman, and Jonathan Dymond survey society as such from the Christian standpoint and condemn its selfishness, luxury, greed, and folly. Many of their strictures became actual points in the Quaker discipline. The growth of "concerns" against slavery, against war and military service, against the exploitation of the weak and poor, against extortion may be traced to their writings and witness.<sup>2</sup> Somnolence on industrial questions overcame the Quakers in the early nineteenth century, as it did all other Christian Communion: but the twentieth century saw a great awakening of the Christian conscience. This culminated with the Friends

<sup>1</sup> *Property*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Swarthmore Lecture* for 1913, and *The First and Second Periods of Quakerism*, 2 vols., W. C. Braithwaite, 1923.

in the addition of the following Query to the Twelve Queries now periodically read out in the Society's meetings: "Do you, as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, take a living interest in the social condition of those around you? What place do you give to social service for others? Do you seek to understand the causes of social evils and to take your right share in the endeavour to remove them?" The intervention of the Friends in public affairs, political and economic, from the Christian point of view, is one of the results of their new social concern.

JOHN WESLEY was drawn to the community-life of the Moravians at Herrnhut under Count Zinzendorf, as he was to the sociological and industrial experiments of John Bellers. He visited Herrnhut, and gave long descriptions of their way of life and discipline in his *Journal*,<sup>1</sup> "because they hold fast the discipline, as well as the faith and practice, of the Apostolic Church." He lived a community-life himself upon a small scale both at the Foundry and at City Road. From the newly-discovered Diary of Richard Viney the Moravian, we learn that Wesley desired social development for his people upon the lines of John Bellers's surviving *College of Industry* in the Goswell Road, which he visited and studied.<sup>2</sup> This may have inspired Wesley's provision of work for the unemployed in London and other places. His Sermons and Addresses contain many directions to the Methodist people upon the social application of Christianity. He gave definite enough direction to his people about riches, before the wealth-intoxication of the Industrial Revolution. His reiterated maxim was: "Gain all you can, Save all you can, *Give all you can*,"—the emphasis being thrown heavily upon the last phrase, which he illustrated by his own example. He organised the domestic life of

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. pp. 24, 105, 114-139, 140-147. Edition 1872.

<sup>2</sup> See *Wesley Historical Society's Proceedings*, 1924-5.

his Itinerant Preachers upon the principle of the living, and the family, wage—*allowances* sufficient for simple necessities, increasing *pro rata* with the number of children and the growth of family needs. To this day it is a vital part of the Methodist ministerial economy that there shall be no want and no luxury or waste.

Methodist direction and discipline continued upon the lines laid down by Wesley, but did not develop. It remained comparatively silent upon all social and economic evils until recently. It was engrossed in active but individualistic Evangelism, and, at the beginning, sought to avoid renewed political suspicion by the method of ignoring public affairs. It indirectly served the social needs of its age,<sup>1</sup> but it failed, as did the older Churches, to develop or apply a Christian ethic adequate to the necessities of a new and appalling situation at the opening of the nineteenth century.

Guidance is now given, in general terms, by the Methodist Conferences to their people upon such matters as public vices, sweating, bad housing, the minimum wage, unemployment, the League of Nations, and, at long last, upon the unchristian nature of war. But no effective social discipline is yet in being or even conceived.

### (c) *Modern tendencies and achievements*

To sum up: The Post-Reformation Protestant Churches, having dispensed with the early and later systems of the Confessional, Penance, and Indulgences, reorganised their direction and discipline without these. They made a serious effort to revert to the methods of primitive Christian self-discipline. This arose from the recovered sense of the immediate responsibility of the soul to God, from the new place assigned to the Scriptures, now translated into the spoken languages, as the

<sup>1</sup> See Elie Halévy, *A History of the English People in 1815* (Fisher Unwin), 1925, and S. Webb's *Story of the Durham Miners*, pp. 21-24.

supreme, if not the sole, rule of life, and from the fresh value attached to the sermon. But it was also found necessary to accompany this with some system of Church discipline. For more than a century this assumed, with ascetic Puritanism, a severe form, especially with the Calvinistic Churches, as seen in Presbyterianism. Then a gradual decay of discipline set in, due to many causes. The personal morality of Church members grew better with the general elevation of moral tone and habit in society at large. Hence a natural and gratifying decrease of certain kinds of Church discipline.

The development of Individualism and the emergence of emancipated personality reacted in many ways upon the discipline exercised in the Reformed Churches. It made members less submissive to authority—more restive and independent. As wealth increased or the prospect of it grew, Church interference or even guidance in its pursuit was resented or ignored. Economic theories, widely accepted, led to a false intellectual distinction between business as a “science” and Christian ethics. Even the rapid growth of a noble philanthropy induced many to compound with their consciences by satisfying certain humane sympathies. The result was ethical blindness to unchristian methods of wealth-creation and accumulation. Society with its industry and commerce grew increasingly complex, conflicting loyalties arose, and clear ethical guidance from the Churches became as difficult as by many it was undesired.

The Industrial Revolution was so deep and literal a revolution, and was upon so vast a scale and occurred with such appalling rapidity, that the conscience and activity of the Churches failed to keep ethical and spiritual pace with it. This was the more so as the leading members of the Reformed Churches were themselves caught up in the swirl of this economic typhoon

—they were carried from their Christian bearings, whether they suffered or profited by the storm.

Parallel with this, in the internal life of the Presbyterian and Independent Churches the position of the Elder and Deacon changed. The office and function of the Minister grew in power and importance, through the new value attached to the sermon, *pari passu* with the increasing indisposition of the laity to participate in the administration of church discipline. It then fell into the hands of ministers dependent upon their churches, and declined. Then the growth among the middle class of new wants, and new habits of luxury and ease, side by side with the greater spirit of acquisitiveness, led to further hindrances to discipline, despite the new need thereof. Hence while the grosser sins declined, a whole new set of spiritual and social needs developed, and a multitude of new ethical problems arose regarding which no guidance and no discipline existed. Then appeared "the dual code" of ethical life in the Church—one for Sunday, home, and friends, and another for week-days, the market, the mill, the factory, shop, and office.

It is probable, too, that Post-Reformation Church discipline received a deadly blow when doctrinal and ecclesiastical differences arose, for discipline enforced might be suspected of being exercised in an intolerant and partisan spirit. Discipline became thus discredited and disliked: it lost the support of an acquiescing, because accusing and guilty, conscience. The Presbyterians ruined discipline by undue heresy-hunting. The Independents and Baptists ruined it by relating it too definitely to standardised inward experiences. The Church of England ruined it by connecting it with ecclesiastical position, privileges, and power.

But most of all, penal discipline declined as a new confidence developed in the bare power of persuasion, example, instruction, and Christian public opinion.

The element of coercion seemed to be out of harmony with the nature of the Christian religion. Further, discipline, it was felt, is apt to weaken personality. Even concerning direction Vinet says: "Respect the principles of liberty and responsibility and refuse to become in the stead of a conscience for any man: for there are not wanting those who will be desirous of resigning theirs into your hands."<sup>1</sup> A real ethic is a voluntary ethic, and no compulsion can ever of itself make a good man—which is the essential problem of the Christian Church. Such is the modern feeling toward even "direction," much more is it so towards "discipline."

Yet it still remains a real and urgent question, in view of both the world's and the Church's need of ethical elevation in many personal and still more in many social directions, whether the Churches should not clarify their teaching and tighten up their discipline, their conditions of continuous Church membership. It is urgent that they give ethical inspiration and leadership and also keep themselves free from complicity with unchristian social developments.

<sup>1</sup> *Pastoral Theology*, p. 247.

## CHAPTER V

### POST-REFORMATION DIRECTION AND DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

**I**N an organised State, no other organisation can be wholly free of the government or the applied policy of that state. The Church of England has, thus, its peculiar contribution to make to the problem of direction and discipline because of its more intimate connexion with the state. Up to the Reformation, this Church, like those of other European nations, was a branch of the Western Church, partaking of its common life, and having a common standard of discipline. There was no intention of parting radically either with that standard, or with its methods of application. Both were, however, in large measure made impossible by the new conditions, partly those created by Henry VIII, partly those due to the opening out of the New World,<sup>1</sup> but largely those due to the necessary continuity of English law with its feudalistic past. For Feudalism meant, as Hildebrand had seen, divided allegiance. It maintained the fundamental secular and military basis of society. Bishops and abbots were both spiritual and feudal peers; higher posts in the church were used as rewards for royal servants; single-minded devotion to religion was

<sup>1</sup> On the wider stage of Western Christendom, international dealings could no longer be controlled, except by the making of international treaties and law, but the work of Suarez and Grotius in this direction was yet to come, and its fruition was yet farther off.

almost impossible. Church and state had a common life and almost common standards and the respective jurisdiction of each was loosely defined.

(a) *Official Direction*

Thus when an end had been forcibly put to wider direction and guidance, national authority of this mixed character had to fill the breach; and in 1537 *The Institution of a Christian Man*, including an exposition of the Decalogue, was published by such authority. In 1540 a book of Homilies was printed by Royal allowance. In 1542 Convocation determined to put forth a book of Homilies "to stay such errors as were then by ignorant preachers being sparkled among the people and against the most pernicious and capital vices that useth (alas) to reign in this realm of England." Cranmer was the chief mover in this and he designed it to commend the principal virtues commended in Scripture. It was published in 1547; but already in 1543 *The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man*, produced by a royal commission of bishops and divines, and approved by convocation, had been put forth by the king. In 1545 a new Primer was authorised, meant partly "for the better bringing up of youth in the knowledge of their duty towards God, their prince, and all others in their degree." Value also must be attached to the regular authorised reading in the public services of the church of the new English versions of the Bible.

In 1549 the new Prayer Book was authorised for use with its two exhortations, rubrics providing for excommunication, and its catechism, etc. "And if ye shall perceive your offences to be not only against God, but also against your neighbours, then ye shall reconcile yourselves to them, being ready to make restitution and satisfaction to the utmost of your powers for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other." "My duty

towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do to me."

In 1571 the Thirty-nine Articles were issued, the thirty-third of which recognises excommunication and penance as still in force. This had been preceded, in 1562, by a second book of Homilies. In 1662 the final revision of the Prayer Book took place, and the regret expressed in the preface to its *Commination Service* that "godly discipline" had disappeared, itself affords some evidence that moral discipline was still regarded as part of the Church's function. After that it is a long time before the Church takes up again the task of official direction; but that is due largely no doubt to the fact that the action of the Church was for long hampered by State authority, whilst the State authority itself was far too greatly occupied with the problems of political dissension to pay attention to the demand for moral progress.

This position of impotence continued for about one hundred and fifty years. For it was not till 1852 that the convocations of the Church, silenced in 1717, began again to meet regularly. Then, in 1867, the Lambeth gatherings of the whole Anglican episcopate commence, and the 1888 Conference presently turned its attention to the social responsibilities of Christian people, and laid down the principle that "the Christian Church is bound, following the teaching of her Master, to aid every wise endeavour which has for its object the material and moral welfare of the poor." "If any members of this spiritual family (of mankind) were greater, richer, or better than the rest, they were bound to use their special means or ability in the service of the whole." The Bishops did not themselves proceed to work out the duties of Christians in social life, but in 1897 they required that "Wherever possible there should be formed, as a part of local church organisation, committees consisting chiefly of laymen whose work should

be to study social and industrial problems from the Christian point of view, and to assist in creating and strengthening an enlightened public opinion in regard to such problems, and in promoting a more active spirit of social service as a part of Christian duty"; whilst in 1908, they declared that "A committee or organisation for social service should be part of the equipment of every diocese, and, as far as practicable, of every parish." In 1918, two valuable and definitive reports were published, with the authority of the two Archbishops, entitled: *Christianity and Industrial Problems* and *The Church and Social Service*. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 devoted a section to such matters, and the official attitude of the Anglican Church can now be found set out in Resolutions 73 to 80 of that conference.

### (b) *Individual witness*

It would seem from this brief review of official action that the Church as a whole has failed, sometimes without excuse, to rise above the fatal and often inhuman apathy of its surroundings. But there has been no entire failure of light and guidance within the fold of the church. Bishop Jewel was a tower of strength at a difficult time, and Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* have been of lasting value, among other results providing the basis for Locke's *Treatise on Civil Government*. The saintly and ascetic life of the great scholar Andrewes had wide influence; but with Laud, the difficulties of his position, bound up with the royal prerogative, prevented the full fruits of the genius and learning of the great archbishop from being adequately realised. Bishop Sanderson continued to deal faithfully with Christian standards of conduct in his *Cases of Conscience*, on the lines already begun by Jeremy Taylor and still represented by Richard Baxter in his *Christian Directory*. Amongst such may be

named also Bishop Ken, Bishop Butler, and Bishop Thomas Wilson, who wrote his *Ecclesiastical Constitutions* in 1704. He came into conflict with the secular courts and was imprisoned for a time. Spiritual direction was also maintained during the next century by Bishop Fleetwood and Jeremy Collier, while William Law and his *Serious Call* had great influence with many, including John Wesley.

As opposed more or less definitely to the above, we must, however, remember the dominating influence of Bacon and Selden, Hobbes, Harrington and Halifax, the spiritual forefathers of the eighteenth century, with its rationalism and utilitarianism. The lowest depth was reached in the moral philosophy of William Paley, at the end of the eighteenth century; and unfortunately it is from his works, owing perhaps to the long continued study of Paley at Cambridge University, that modern writers on jurisprudence seem to have gleaned their notions of Christian ethics.

The story of the nineteenth century is similar. It was not that scattered light and leading wholly failed, but that thought was dominated by the less Christian philosophies of men like Adam Smith and the economists, Bentham and the utilitarians. In this connection we have every reason to bear in mind the great work and influence of Shute Barrington and Coleridge, Thomas Arnold, Wilberforce and Shaftesbury; the Christian Social Movement of F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley and J. M. Ludlow, John Ruskin, Samuel Barnett, Arnold Toynbee, and Stewart D. Headlam; the Christian Social Union with Bishop Westcott, Canon Scott Holland, Bishop Gore and Dean Rashdall: all of whom have contributed their portion to the returning sensitiveness of the Christian conscience to its social duties, in the wider sense inclusive of economics and industry.

*(c) Discipline*

If direction has been made difficult in the Church of England by the relations of Church and State, still more has "discipline." For the discipline of the conduct of Christian people has always been conceived to be exercised partly through the secular courts and only partly through Church courts. In the beginning, in Anglo-Saxon times, bishop and alderman sat side by side in the one court which exercised jurisdiction in both "spiritual" and secular matters. And when, in process of time, the courts were divided, the division was not such as to give to the Church exclusive jurisdiction in one sphere, and to the State exclusive jurisdiction in another. Statesmen continued to achieve their political ends through their influence over the Church courts and ecclesiastics continued to take part in the framing and administration of secular law, and to regard the State courts as the right and proper means for imposing a Christian discipline upon their people in the spheres in which the State courts operated. So, to this day, there is no clear theory as to the seat of moral authority in the Church of England. Property has been the special sphere of the King's courts, whilst, from the Middle Ages onward, Church courts have had jurisdiction and exercised powers over forms of immorality to which lay courts paid no heed; fornication, slander, libel, etc. Powers over the clergy were considerable, while the laity were visited with penance and excommunication: but always, in the last resort, there was the support of the secular arm.

In 1382 appears the first statute against heresy, implying disaffection, political and ecclesiastical. In 1401 burning was made the penalty, while in 1414 heresy became an indictable offence to be tried in the bishop's court: courts which were not becoming more popular.

During the Reformation the old legal organisation of the church with its bishops, its convocations and its courts, was largely preserved; but in the place of the pope as the supreme court of appeal it was subjected to the authority of king and parliament. All canons not contrary to the laws of the realm and the king's prerogative were to remain in force until revised, so that to this day large parts of mediæval canon law form part of the ecclesiastical law of England. New canons were not to be made without the royal assent (although since James I. even with that assent they do not bind the laity). The result of the changes was that parliament found itself legislating on church discipline and attaching severe penalties for non-compliance. Since Henry VIII, several statutes have been passed by parliament on usury, for instance.

In 1534, the study of canon law was prohibited and by "the Supreme Head" Act, parliamentary authority gave the king the power to visit and amend all abuses and heresies. This visitatorial power was retained for a hundred years later, being exercised after 1559 by the highly unpopular court of High Commission, a regularly constituted court of justice set up by Elizabeth in that year and only abolished in the Long Parliament of 1640. In 1545 an act was passed enabling doctors of civil law to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In 1547 Henry's dictatorship passed into the hands of the privy council, who acted on the principle of absolute civil supremacy over church jurisdiction; and Cranmer all through being weak and subservient, the council ordered a general visitation, and suspended the powers of the bishops while it lasted. The opposition of the bishops of London and Winchester was met with imprisonment, and later deprivation. The same tyranny deprived and imprisoned other bishops. Thus the civil government

seized the ecclesiastical machinery, and made itself responsible for its working.

In 1549 the first Act of Uniformity was passed, and offences against it were to be dealt with either at common law or in the ecclesiastical courts. The political device of "conformity" was again at work, in which Henry probably aimed at reality, but it became, in time, a hollow farce. This was most injurious to religion and the assent of the church under royal pressure was a deplorable fact.

The principle invoked in discipline was now largely the political one of conformity to the established law of the nation. So in the sixteenth century the law required conformity against the Roman Church, now regarded as a foreign enemy, plotting the destruction of the nation. In this and the next century it was also against the disaffection and separatism, independence and revolutionary aims of Puritans and others; during the Commonwealth it was against Anglicans and Papists; then against Puritans and Papists, Jacobites and Independents; and the same political requirements drove the Non-jurors out. In 1750 nonconforming is still referred to as a crime.

On the other hand, the thirty-third of the Articles of 1571, dealing with excommunication and penance, probably had moral offences rather than non-conformity or schism in view. But, while not wholly a dead letter, this kind of discipline, about which the thorough-going Puritans, who inclined to the Genevan model in Reform, were zealous, was less and less put into practice, in the case either of clergy or laity. This tendency, due in part at least to the control of Church by State, was more marked in the Restoration era than before it; while the opportunity for reform in this respect was lessened by the fact that the Church was disabled for corporate initiative by the suspension of convocation in the interests of the political struggle between

Whigs and Tories, first at intervals from 1690 onwards and then finally in 1717 for nearly a century and a half.

The suspension of Church activity occurred during a period of great commercial expansion when vast changes were taking place in social life, a time too of avarice, greed, and brutal indifference, unrestrained by the prevalent rationalism; while in the Church the rights of property governed appointments to livings, making it "almost as impossible to prevent the institution of an unfit man as to eject him after."

Public discipline continued well on into the eighteenth<sup>1</sup> century, but it is hard to find evidence of its being exercised for any other moral offences than fornication and slander. Quite early in that century also a strong movement in favour of commutation took place, and a money payment in lieu of other penalty became a thing of daily occurrence in the courts. Thus discipline, in the form of public penance, ceased to operate in the case of the well-to-do. An Act of 1813 deprived excommunication of any civil disabling effects, and the Church Discipline Act of 1840 introduced a simpler procedure into the church courts, while other legal obstacles were removed. There is now a regular series of church courts, archdeacon's, bishop's, archbishop's, with final appeal, by an Act of 1832, to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, though the jurisdiction of the latter has not been generally accepted. In 1857 a new court took out of church jurisdiction Probate, Divorce and Matrimonial Causes, and jurisdiction in other grave offences has now been transferred to the lay courts. But a certain authority still exists in the Church courts over the laity in matters of adultery and fornication;<sup>2</sup> also in heresy and schism, which can be dealt with by penance and excommunication and

<sup>1</sup> *The Diary of a Country Parson*, by James Woodford, pp. 69-70, ed. John Beresford, Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Whence it follows that the civil court inflicts no penalty for these offences.

strengthened by the possibility (?) of six months' imprisonment. What happened, however, in a recent lawsuit *re* the application of the rubric in the Prayer Book to repel from communion all "notorious and open evil livers," to one who had married in accordance with the law of the land and not of the church, must be called to mind in this connexion.

Jurisdiction in cases of irreligion and immorality is of course still in the hands of Church courts, but the position is rightly regarded as far from satisfactory; for the Church could not—while the state has long withdrawn from any attempt to—enforce Christian discipline. The existence of the Assembly machinery should make a solution to-day a simpler task, if we can be delivered from the evil spirit of political and religious prejudice and rancour, and make effective a single-minded devotion to the cause of Christ.

## CHAPTER VI

### MODERN SOCIAL REFORM AND CATHOLIC DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH OF ROME

IT will be convenient to consider the period covered, roughly, by the last hundred years. At its commencement, modern industrialism had so developed over Europe as to present the same problems to Catholic leaders and students in different lands. The gospel of economic liberalism had spread so wide as to meet the attention of the Church in those countries where her influence was strong.

The great landmark and dividing line of the period is the publication of Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical, *On the Condition of the Working Classes*,<sup>1</sup> in May, 1891. Other important directions have been given from time to time but they can all be related to this. It would be a mistake, however, to regard this outstanding pronouncement as a "bolt from the blue," for both its content and its genesis are intimately bound up with Catholic social thought during the previous sixty years, the first part of our period. In 1834, for instance, we find the Vicomte de Villeneuve-Bargemont,<sup>2</sup> a French Catholic deputy and economist, outlining principles of reform which show a marked resemblance to those of Leo XIII's Encyclical of sixty years later. We find him writing and promoting legislation in favour of a living wage, for the regulation

<sup>1</sup> An English translation is published by the Catholic Social Guild, 3d.

<sup>2</sup> Moon, *The Labour Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France*, Macmillan, 1921.

of hours and conditions of labour, particularly of women and children, attacking the economic theory of non-intervention, advocating the establishment of trade unions, provident funds, and schools for adult workers, while for agriculture he demanded the encouragement of small holdings, credits, and co-operative societies. The same similarity is found in the writings and speeches of Bishop Ketteler of Mainz,<sup>1</sup> (1811 to 1877), the German baron and civil servant, who became a priest, deputy and bishop, and whose spirit has inspired the great social development which exists in Western Germany to-day. Indeed Leo XIII described him as "my great predecessor." Like Manning, Ketteler preached by example and by word, ever ready to sacrifice all his personal possessions to promote the cause of the poor.

There followed a succession of churchmen and publicists in France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Austria, with Manning in this country, whose influence contributed to bear directly on the mind of Leo.<sup>2</sup> Gaspard Decurtins, (1855 to 1918), a Swiss deputy, was building up a Catholic democratic movement in Switzerland. With him were associated, in annual congress in Fribourg, sociologists from different countries whose deliberations and conclusions were regularly forwarded to Pope Leo by Cardinal Mermillod. In France Count Albert de Mun,<sup>3</sup> (1841 to 1914), gained his first interest in the social question through the work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and through contact with some kindly German Catholics, followers of Ketteler, while he was a prisoner of war in 1870. The horrors of the Commune gave but further fire to his burning sense of

<sup>1</sup> Metlake, *Ketteler's Social Reform*, Washbourne, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> Crawford, *The Church and the Worker*, Catholic Social Guild, 3d., from whom much that follows has been taken. Antoine, *Cours d'Economie Sociale*, Paris, Alcan.

<sup>3</sup> Mun, Albert de, *Ma Vocation Sociale*, Paris, 1908.

sympathy with the poor. He built up a great organisation of study clubs for working men and promoted social legislation.

Meanwhile, advised by Cardinals Manning and Gibbons, Pope Leo had dealt generously with the American Knights of Labour when efforts were made to bring them under ecclesiastical censure. Meanwhile, too, the Pope had received and given repeated assurances of sympathy to pilgrimages of working-men. Decurtins in 1888 persuaded the Swiss National Council to invite European countries to international agreement on conditions of labour, particularising the maintenance of family life, the guarding of Sunday rest and the protection of women and children. Pope Leo expressed warm approval. When, however, the German Emperor suddenly issued an invitation to a similar congress in Berlin, Switzerland waived her rights of priority, and Leo XIII again intervened with a letter of congratulation to the Emperor.

All this is necessary, and more to the same effect could have been said, to show that Leo XIII had been in close contact with the social question for some time before the Encyclical was published and in consultation with many other students, churchmen and laymen, who had been endeavouring to apply the traditional principles of the Church to the modern industrial situation.

The content of the Encyclical was not new. Much that he laid down for the Church at large had already been said by others; and they, too, were but seeking to find the solution of modern problems in the doctrines of their mediæval predecessors.

The Pope analyses the problem and traces it to the decay of religion and the break-up of mediæval corporate life. "Hence, by degrees, it has come to pass that working-men have been surrendered, all isolated

and helpless, to the hard-heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. The mischief has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the Church, is nevertheless, under a different guise, but with the like injustice, still practised by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added the custom of working by contract, and the concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals ; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the labouring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself."

He argues every point, but asserts nothing that he does not elucidate from Christian morality and the philosophy of human nature. He rejects those remedies which would strive to alleviate the propertyless by abolishing property entirely. He defends the right to ownership as a natural consequence of human nature. Man must labour to live and must direct his life and provide for the morrow by the use of his reason. Hence he has a natural right to arrange and dispose of the fruit of his labour. He draws the same consequence from man's duty as the father of a family.

Wages should be such that a man can acquire a little property if he wishes, and " the law should favour ownership." As a result, " property will certainly become more equitably divided." On the other hand he asserts " the principle that it is one thing to have a right to the possession of money, and another thing to have a right to use money as one wills." And he quotes St. Thomas Aquinas in support of the principle. Ketteler had quoted the same teaching many years earlier.

Normally it should not be necessary for the State to interfere and " the more that is done for the benefit of the working classes by the general laws of the country, the less need will there be to seek for special

means to relieve them." Yet some of the strongest passages in this strongly-worded document voice a demand for State interference and regulation of labour conditions and that the State should govern for the benefit of those who most need its help. "The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State . . . wage-earners should be specially cared for and protected by the Government." "Indeed their co-operation is so important that it may be truly said that it is only by the labour of working-men that States grow rich."

He predicts no millennium; labour and suffering must always exist. He rejects, also, the doctrine of essential war between class and class, and demands rather a co-operation between classes, based on Christian charity rightly understood and a recognition of the dignity of labour.

He demands State protection of women and children from labour unsuited to their age or sex, and regulation of conditions and hours of labour according to circumstances. Thus, "those who work in mines and quarries and extract coal, stone and metals from the bowels of the earth should have shorter hours in proportion as their labour is more severe and trying to health."

He is emphatically opposed to the doctrine that wages must be settled by unrestricted free bargaining. All agreements, in order to be just, must presuppose both proper rest for soul and body, and a minimum wage that will suffice to keep the working man in decent comfort, "a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man." A discussion has since arisen as to whether this minimum wage is to be interpreted in justice as sufficient to provide for the individual himself or for a family of average size. Practically all writers hold the latter view, and this conclusion seems certainly to follow from those portions of the Encyclical which deal with

family life. A few, however, have maintained that in justice the minimum living wage applies to the individual only and that the family living wage is a duty of charity or social justice. The whole question has important bearing on the system of Family Allowances which has been mainly initiated and most effectively encouraged by the Catholic Social Movement.

He reminds us that "to defraud anyone of wages that are his due is a crime which cries to the avenging anger of Heaven." Speaking to the world at large, the Pope can only lay down general principles and can scarcely deal with practical matters. That is the duty of his followers.

He signalises working-men's associations or trade unions as one of the chief measures of reform, emphasising the duties of these associations as well as their rights. He specially defends the right of men to associate for the promotion of their common needs, a natural right which the State cannot deny without contradicting the very principle of its own existence.

But when all is said and done there can be no reform without religion, the most important instrument of all.

The Encyclical, the culmination of sixty years of labour on the part of many students, gave to their conclusions the sanction of the highest authority in the Church and brought an achievement otherwise impossible. The immediate effect was a great impetus to further study, a flood of literature, further efforts in social legislation, and the growth of many organisations, some new and of a new character, some already in existence. We may mention educational and propagandist organisations such as the *German Volksverein* centred at München-Gladbach, with a pre-war membership of 900,000, the *Action Populaire*, formerly at Rheims, now in Paris, for literature, research and enquiry; co-operative organisations such as the *Bærenbond*, (the Peasants' Union of Belgium), and the

great Christian Trade Union Movement, (interconfessional), with its many affiliations and its International at Utrecht. (In Holland, alone, there are twenty Catholic trade union and labour periodicals.)

These co-operative and trade organisations on definitely Christian lines exist not merely for the protection of members from materialistic and atheist propaganda in other organisations, but chiefly in recognition of the principle that every department of daily life must be saturated with the guiding influence of religion. To carry this purpose further, the Arbeiterverein of Germany, (whose paper, *The Westdeutsche Arbeiter-Zeitung*, has a circulation of 155,000), aims at the education, under religious influences, of Catholic workers in order to supplement and support the work of the Christian Trade Unions.

In our insular position, the Encyclical, its history and its spirit, are comparatively unknown, though as we have said, English influences in the person of Manning probably shared in its formulation. Probably, also, it has not been without effect even in England. It can be argued with confidence that it has helped to form the clear conception in recent years of the Living Wage, and certainly a plausible case can be made out to show that it and its progenitors, particularly the Fribourg group, had a direct influence on the steps which led to the establishment of the International Labour Office<sup>1</sup> and to the principles embodied in the "Charter of Labour" drawn up to guide the Labour Office's work.

<sup>1</sup> See Max Turmann in *The International Labour Review*, for July, 1922.

## CHAPTER VII

### QUO TENDIMUS : THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

IT is useful to note first how the directive and disciplinary activities of the Church have been related in the past. Quite different motives have lain behind them ; whilst at the same time they have been closely intertwined. *Discipline* has sprung in the main from self-protection. The Church needed to preserve its character as " the communion of saints " even to the point of excluding diseased members, temporarily as a rule and generally with remedial intent. *Direction* has sprung rather from the desire to draw out and perfect the distinctive temper and character of the Christian soul. Direction has thus the more positive, discipline the more negative, function.

#### (a) *The decreasing severity of Discipline*

From its very nature discipline confines itself to grave and patent breaches of Christian principle. In the beginning it dealt with enmity or wrong between brethren. Later in the early Church it was directed exclusively against three things : idolatry, man-slaughter, and sexual immorality. Since to fall into one of these sins was taken as evidence that in such a man the Spirit of Christ was dead, he must be cast out lest he contaminate the body of Christ. The slowness with which the Church came to perceive it possible that even one, " second chance " for repentance, might be allowed to such a defaulter, stands witness to the

sternness and objective definiteness of the moral standards of the early Church.

In the Church of the Middle Ages the wall of defence is no longer erected on this side of the City of God. The Church has now a strongly established position and a clearly realised life and function of its own in the world. It feels surer of the power of its own penitential system, even as regards these gravest of "mortal" sins. To be a Christian is also now a much more complicated thing to describe in moral terms. The lines are blurred: the types shade into one another. The body of moral ideas which the Church has built up allows for subtle gradations and exceptions. Lines can be traversed now without irrevocable harm being done either to the soul or to the Church. There is no longer, therefore, the early simplicity or rigour of exclusion.

But lines of defence were drawn, and drawn sharply, in the Church of the Middle Ages, though on a different principle. They were drawn at the point where a man began to question the Church's authority over him. And they were drawn especially where the self-assertion of intellect or worldly pride and power reared itself against the accepted systems of moral and spiritual ideas. Men might be censured for immorality or cruelty or greed: but they were excommunicated for rebellion against the moral and spiritual authority of the Church.

In the Modern period of divisions in Western Christendom, discipline within Protestantism has generally ceased to be anything more than a buttress against positive scandal in the eyes of the world at large. In its discipline the Church mostly condemns those sins only which public opinion also condemns. It does not in any way mark off a clear dividing line in conduct between Christian and non-Christian. Discipline, in fact, has generally ceased to be a living function of the Christian body as such. It is necessary for the Church,

like any other "social group," to set some limits to its membership; but even in that respect it functions feebly and ineffectively.

(b) *The increasing need for Direction*

Direction, on the other hand, has grown and grown throughout the centuries, with the Christian spirit always animating, if not entirely informing it. At the beginning, Christian teaching and public opinion were exercised within the Christian body to maintain an effective spirit of social goodwill. Social distinctions were not suffered to break up the unity of the members of the socially various classes which were gathered into the Christian Churches: man and woman, learned and unlearned, slave and freeman, all found human contact in the loving social fellowship of the early Church. Most of all were the inequalities of wealth examined and discussed in order to prevent their becoming divisive influences in the Christian society. The encouragement of generous philanthropies and the discouragement of the claims of the wealthy to any private, exclusive, title to their possessions, kept the Church a body which trained and disciplined its members, without need of formal rule, to be more sociable, more disinterested, more simple-minded than the non-Christian world.

In the Middle Ages, when the Christian societies had been diluted by a vast influx of those who were at first Christian only in formal creed and practice, we can no longer reckon on the power of this educative influence, once exercised almost automatically by the Christian body through its own habitual life and fellowship. Whatever influence was exerted had to be exerted mainly through the teaching ministry of the Church, supported indeed by striking individual examples of Christian living, but no longer so clearly supported by the general body of Christian opinion and aspiration.

Those were the days in which the Christian impulse to a distinctive way of living found expression chiefly in the ordered life of the monastic institutions.

The instinctive Christian desire for help in realising the Christian ideal of living was bound, however, to find something to take the place of the bracing influence of the older Christian group, whose characteristic features had been accentuated by contrast with the surrounding pagan society. This it did signally in the schools of spiritual direction that grew up around the Irish Monasteries, and were by them spread widely over Europe. These sought primarily to fortify the "religious," in retreat from "the world," in their inner struggle to maintain personal holiness of heart. But, as time went on, the discipline of direction, associated with sacramental confession, was applied to those living in the world, in order to enable them to live a life more characteristically animated by the spirit of Christ. Such direction naturally took account of the circumstances of the times, and dealt with the chief temptations to allow the Christian standard to be overlaid by other standards derived from the worldly wisdom of the age. It thus involved the elaboration of a standard or standards of conduct fitted to express the Christian character, at various stages of its development, in the particular social context of the day. So, whilst the point of view of these systems of instruction is centred in the maintenance of a harmony between the inner spirit of the individual and the spirit of Christ, they embody a considerable amount of detailed social ethics.

The great strength (though in the end it proved also to be the great defect) of all this system of teaching was the coherent body of moral ideas which lay behind it. Within the limits of their own horizons the Mediæval thinkers worked out a philosophy of society duly correlated, on the one hand, with the general and not entirely Christian ethical principles which the en-

lightened public opinion of their day approved as necessary and right, and, on the other hand, with the special and more difficult and distinctive ethical principles which were felt to belong to the finer unfoldings of the Christian spirit. They were able thus to create a public opinion which looked at all questions of conduct in a way which was at least theo-centric, and to a certain extent Christo-centric, and which never questioned the absolute validity of the ideas thus insisted upon. The special Christian graces flowered naturally on this plainer stem ; whilst a certain amount of effective pressure could also be exerted on those who had no special sympathy with the highest ideals of the Christian ethic, so as to induce them, too, to practise the Christian life in measure.

Ultimately, however, this compactness and apparent completeness and self-sufficiency of the body of Mediæval ethics was its undoing. It was static in ideal and nature : there was no room in it for growth : so there came the day when its principles were no longer accepted as axiomatic, nor its detailed applications recognised as practicable or even desirable. It fell to pieces even in the later Middle Ages ; and in the centuries when it was no longer a living body of thought its nominal continuance as the guide of Christian conduct resulted in all manner of evasions and insincerities, the toleration of which destroyed the moral prestige of the Church for centuries, and to some extent impaired the moral integrity of those who formed the mind of the Church of the time. But though the systems of moral instruction which grew out of the spiritual needs of the Middle Ages had crumbled away (as they began to do in the thirteenth century) and been brushed aside (as they finally were in the seventeenth), the need for such guidance in Christian conduct was more acute than ever. For Christendom was embarking on a great venture, calling for new ways

of living, and these could only be an effective expression of the Christian spirit for their own age, if based upon a true diagnosis of the social needs and possibilities of the times.

When Europe finally emerged from the process of transition from its Feudal basis to its modern basis of economic and political opportunism (a process embracing the Renaissance and the Reformation, and much besides), the Christian conscience emerged with a conscious ideal of leavening society, in all its newly unfolding life, with Christian principles. The task was a great adventure, the more so since it was undertaken with far less apparatus of guiding rule and maxim than had been the equipment of the past. In this great adventure men looked especially, though in varying degrees, to the inner light of the Spirit of God in their own soul; to the stimulus of the newly recovered practice of prophetic Christian preaching, dealing largely and freshly with the greater themes of life; and to the mental and spiritual contacts of Christian disciples stimulating each other in the closer and freer fellowship of Christian aspiration, which again became a more characteristic feature of organised Church life.

As examples of this modern activity take first the Genevan attempt to establish a Christian society by an exacting discipline along fairly traditional lines; and, at the other extreme, the Anabaptist attempt to break away from conventional social standards and base society upon those distinctively Christian ideals of freedom and fellowship which are indeed the apex, but not the whole, of the Christian morality. Both these experiments bear witness, in their different ways, to the modern Christian aspiration for progress in Christian social practice. On the other hand, this aspiration is largely offset by the modern fear of infringing the liberty of the individual. Indeed, it is necessary to note the clash of two tendencies in the modern

Church—the one toward a more determined and voluntary compliance with the Christian standard where it can be discerned ; the other against defining it where experience has proved past definition unsatisfactory or awkward. These two tendencies have to some extent neutralised each other, leaving the Christian world without sufficient light and leading in all these matters. We do indeed find the Quakers and, at a later date, the Methodists attempting to eradicate emphatic faults against the well-being of society and to develop qualities of palpable use to the community ; but they have done so without any coherent idea of the nature of a truly Christian society. Their social philosophy has been world-affirming and liberty-loving, but has lacked any more positive or constructive principle. Latterly, however, there has been a great searching of heart among the rank and file of Christian people for new lines of Christian conduct not required in the tradition of the past. And though so far this has resulted for the most part in the insistence upon higher standards of conduct only in the narrow range of qualities which tend to economic efficiency—qualities like sobriety and industry, for example,—it is sometimes very much more radical than this, and much more hopeful of successful adventure for the bringing in of a Christian social order.

Looking back over these past attempts to discipline the Christian soul and direct its ways of life, we take note especially of two points. On the one hand we note the post-Reformation emphasis on the spiritual autonomy of the individual, which we value supremely. We believe in individual spiritual liberty and spontaneous self-expression. We believe in letting each man bear his own burden of moral and spiritual responsibility. We believe in developing individual initiative in thought and conduct, and we do not desire to translate Christianity into an oppressive code

of rule or custom, with which the individual is bound unintelligently to conform. We do not want to stereotype any single pattern of Christian conduct or assert any kind of tyranny over the Christian mind.

On the other hand, we find that, in the sphere of social action, the moral initiative of nearly all Christians is at present almost crushed out of existence by the terrific weight of a system of social life which the Christian soul instinctively knows to be alien to the temper of its Master, but which the average individual is powerless to analyse or understand. For, to understand the bearings of much of our social conduct upon the welfare of others, it is necessary to carry out a complicated piece of analysis requiring peculiar intellectual gifts. And because, for generations back, no one has performed this necessary piece of work, the individual Christian mind and the individual Christian will have been all but paralysed. Along certain restricted lines the post-Reformation discontinuance of authoritative Christian guidance on social issues has indeed stimulated the enterprise and energy of the individual Christian ; but it has at the same time so befogged his moral estimate of the social institutions of the world that it has rendered him, in the average case, almost incapable of conceiving the existence of a social order that should be Christian, and quite incapable of shaping his own action with a view to such an ideal. So far is the task of imagining its outlines beyond the capacity of isolated minds. In order to make the moral initiative of the individual Christian spirit once more possible in the sphere of social conduct, the best obtainable criticism of existing social institutions and the best conceivable forecasts of possible social developments must be made available by thinkers inspired by the Spirit of Christ.

(c) *The synthesis of principles to be achieved*

If we now ask what positive ideals of social life have thus received emphasis in succeeding ages, we find ourselves in possession of a most useful series of complementary principles. In the past they have been emphasised in isolation from each other. In the future it is our task to see them, and to realise them, in due correlation.

The leaders of the early Church, as we have seen, laid stress upon the spirit of generosity and brotherly love as the essentials of Christian living, and made clear their belief that no economic or social inequalities should mar the spiritual equality of the Christian fellowship. Economic inequalities which might be removed and were not, they recognised as threatening the harmony of the Church as a spiritual brotherhood; and they set themselves to cultivate the ways of thinking and feeling about property, and the ways of handling it, which should obviate such disaster.

In the middle period of its life the Church had accepted as unavoidable and made itself the accomplice of a political system which established these inequalities of economic power and social position, and even gave them political stability. It now set itself to guard the soul against the particular moral faults which would eventually beset all those who are implicated in such a system. It had, of course, as always, to fortify the spirit in its contest with the sins besetting the flesh and imperilling the soul in its exercise of the power of self-direction and self-control. But more especially it engaged in a constant fight with greed, pride, cruelty, and self-assertion—the sins which especially beset the possessors of economic, political, and social power. It did much also to encourage and exemplify the qualities which help men to associate and work together in permanent and harmonious communities, and so to

produce an effective corporate life. To these ends it made material progress and commercial development always and everywhere subordinate ; and if its provisions were too inflexible, and if they were ultimately hostile to reasonable development, at least they were guided by a praiseworthy social ideal.

In the modern period the world is in revolt from those elements in the discipline of the past which choked the free expression of life by excessive regulations. It is, we might almost say, infatuated with the idea of unfettered material progress. It has a naïve belief in the powers of society to grow happily if only it is allowed to grow without restraint. Hence its virtues are those of bold initiative, hard work, courageous enterprise. Bound up with this are ideals of human service of a more positive and constructive kind, though they are still unconsciously overlaid with much of the Mediæval cult of the ascetic. The sins against which it is chiefly tilting are those of idleness, stagnation, and that blend of sentimentalism and humbug which always creeps into life when its common practice has been allowed to drift out of harmony with its professed principles, without any clear recognition of the fact. Realism was at least one of the conscious intentions of the Reformation, and, like all realism, it has tended sometimes to establish monstrosities in the attempt to check artificialities.

The principle of liberty, however, and the spirit of revolt are not enough of themselves to guide the attempt at an ideal social order. It is a grave fact that the modern attempt to realise a Christian social order has been so largely without any positive body of principles. It has been hopelessly at the mercy of the practical opportunist, and very often of the opportunist dominated by crudely materialistic aims, who has cared little or nothing for the preservation of the finer spiritual values in the social life and organisation of the past. In

this world of quick returns and hastily improvised transactions, only the roughest and readiest, the crudest and most materialistic ideals of justice and order have gained attention ; and the result has been that the political ideals of the best Mediæval times, which valued the maintenance of goodwill and charity above the increase of material prosperity, have given place to political ideals in which almost every spiritual object is dismissed as irrelevant to the aims of the organised community. So de-spiritualised, the ideals of politics have often become more purely materialistic, more blatantly atheistical, than any Mediæval thinker would have conceived possible, more utterly uninformed by any spiritual idealism than were the recognised political systems of the Greek and Roman pagan world. And these ideals have been the presuppositions accepted by most Christians as the basis for their own individual conduct. It is this general modern surrender to a narrowly utilitarian and eminently godless body of political principles that makes it so necessary to look back to-day over the past, and to pick out the positive elements in the Christian ideals of earlier generations and see if they cannot all be combined in one great whole, with their varied elements no longer in opposition, but ranged in alternate balance and support.

In going forward to this more constructive phase of the attempt to correlate spiritual discipline with social achievement, we must notice, alike for warning and encouragement, one point of far-reaching significance. I refer to the fact that there never yet has been a system of spiritual direction conceived on principles of a completely Christian character, worked out with adequate social knowledge. The sociology of the early Church was largely instinctive and unsystematic. The systems of the past have not been informed by adequately Christian social principles, nor have they sufficiently recognised the proper freedom of the

Christian spirit in the method of their appeal. The sociology of Augustine and the centuries which followed him was dominated by an exaggerated doctrine of human depravity which made it impossible to anticipate the full permeation of the structure of society by Christian principles. The sociology of the Middle Ages was a blend of the better elements in the Roman and Jewish traditions with the more easily assimilated of Christian ideals, the mixture being made by practical administrators who unconsciously conceded a great deal to the political ideas embodied in the social institutions and usages with which they were traditionally familiar. It was a strong and durable mixture, but it contained elements of disharmony between the conduct best calculated to maintain the social order and that which best expresses and developes the Christian soul. The dictates of love to God and love to men were never completely unified, nor were the interests of the here and the hereafter.

We are thus encouraged to hope that a system of moral theology might be worked out to its ultimate social applications to-day with far less fear of distortion from ignorance of social fact and theory, and far more chance of avoiding the unconscious acceptance of non-Christian views of the true purpose and ideal method of social life, than in any past period of Christian history.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PRESENT PHASE OF THE PROBLEM

THE Christian Church, in its centuries of conflict with the forces of the world, which its members renounce that they may thereby prepare themselves to reclaim society for the Kingdom of God, has passed, as we have seen, through three phases. In its earliest ages its mission was felt to be, above all, to create within its own body a pattern of the Christian life in human relationships. To join the Christian community involved the acceptance not only of a creed entirely different from any body of belief held in the world outside, but of a way of living scarcely less distinctive. Primitive Christianity was evangelistic as much by what it could be seen to stand for in the social relations of its members, as by the doctrines which they preached. It was in this way, indeed, that Christianity in the Roman Empire chiefly waged its conflict with the world ; for so hostile, so foreign, so irresistibly powerful was the social order outside the little fold of the faithful, that no direct impact upon it seemed possible. After a period of transition, we find a directly contrary state of things prevailing. Society in the Middle Ages is identical with the Church, whose writ runs throughout Christendom. The authority of her teaching as to social and economic relationships is universally admitted, even when it is disregarded ; there is no secular competitor to provide a contrast or an alternative. With the sixteenth century comes the break-up of

Christendom, and the abandonment of any unified attempt to define or to maintain a Christian standard for economic and political practice; thereafter the faithful Christian is left to fight his battle with the world for the most part single-handed. Social conduct becomes a matter for the individual conscience. And when the eighteenth century economists announced to the masters of the new machines that the general happiness would result spontaneously from the exercise of their enlightened self-interest, they found no authority speaking in the name of Christianity to contradict them.

*(a) The re-assertion of the Christian claim*

The most significant feature of the social movement in the Christian Churches to-day is the indication it gives that this phase is now definitely coming to an end. Not only is this movement growing rapidly in numbers and intensity, but it is striving to pass from the negative stage of protest and appeal, characteristic of it in the previous century, to positive constructive effort which, in proportion as it is realised, will transform altogether the relations of the Church with the world. Men and women in the Christian Churches are no longer confining themselves to appeals to secular authorities to remedy social evils, are no longer content to choose from among contemporary social programmes the one that most appeals to them, and endeavour to enlist for it the support of the Church. They are beginning to talk of a "Christian sociology" or a "Catholic standard of life"; they are asking whether it is not the duty of the Church to present, both to her own members and to the world outside, some picture of what a truly Christian society might be expected to be like, and at the same time to offer direct guidance to her children in the issues that arise in those social and economic relationships which constitute so large a proportion of their

daily lives. No sooner are such questions raised than it is realised that, however desirable and even necessary such things may be, the Church to-day is in no way equipped to provide them. Equally it may be doubted whether the mass of professing Christians would be ready to welcome and act upon such guidance if it were forthcoming.

It is a large part of the significance of Copec that it has imposed upon Christians, almost (in many cases) without their consciously realising it, a measure of "reunion" from a sense of their own shortcomings and by the force of social facts. Christians have found themselves driven together from the necessity of striving to do for the world something which it cannot do for itself; and as a necessary corollary have had to reconsider the social function of the Church, not only in relation to the world, but in regard to her own members. And the first thing we shall have to realise in this connection is that the Church's conflict with the world, now, it seems, passing into a new phase, must necessarily be different in character from what it has been in any of the phases which have preceded it. In our age the Christian Faith is neither persecuted and despised, nor universally acknowledged as the sole source of moral authority. It is in a general way respected, especially when its tenets do not appear to conflict with any obvious interest of a worldly sort; but no social teaching professing to be founded on it will carry any weight *for that reason* with the great majority, whether within the Christian denominations or outside them. The position is, then, that the Church cannot be content to elaborate a pattern of Christian living for the faithful few and leave the world outside alone; nor, on the other hand, can she anticipate much respect, or even attention, from the great majority for the social teaching she may find herself prepared, as time goes on, to proclaim, simply because it is she who proclaims it. She

can neither neglect the mass of men as beyond reach of her voice, nor command them with the accents of authority. The arena to which the Church is preparing to return has changed mightily since she allowed herself to be thrust out of it. She must re-enter it awake to the new conditions and problems, and with an equipment appropriate to them.

Before we set out upon any sustained attempt, then, to discover and apply the elements of a restored Christian sociology, we shall do well to inquire both why it was that the mediæval effort in this direction, largely successful for several centuries, eventually broke down ; and what fundamental changes have taken place in the minds both of those within the Churches and those outside in the intervening period. For unless such an inquiry is undertaken, the Church's teaching, when she is ready to proclaim it, may either prove inapplicable to the realities of the situation, or may fail of its effect on those to whom it is addressed.

### *(b) Past reasons for its lapse*

It has often been suggested that it was the strongly individual tendency of the sixteenth century, which found its secular expression in the Renaissance and its religious embodiment in Protestantism, that caused the abandonment at this time of the attempt to furnish in the name of Christianity a code of social conduct for the individual. Mr. R. H. Tawney, in his Scott Holland Memorial Lectures, delivered a few years back, threw doubt upon this interpretation, at any rate so far as England was concerned. He adduced numerous quotations to show that the reformers, no less than Catholics, deplored the rapidly increasing tendency, especially of the rich, to disregard ecclesiastical injunctions in economic matters, and appealed as whole-heartedly as their opponents to the authority of the Canon Law.

In whatever degree Protestant doctrines may have had their effect indirectly in undermining the authority of the Church's traditional teaching, the Protestant leaders themselves had not, in this century at any rate, any desire to see or intention to allow the Church to be driven out of this sphere. Their failure to prevent this arose, in Mr. Tawney's view, from the fact that while the teaching of the Church had been elaborated to apply to economic relationships of a direct character between maker and purchaser, and master and apprentice, the new economy resulting from the great expansion of commerce consequent upon the recent geographical discoveries, the development of associated production, and the employment of money as financial capital rather than as a mere medium of exchange (to mention but a few factors), was making those relationships every day more complex and more indirect. Space does not suffice to give examples of this. It seems clear, however, that the Church ceased to give that leadership and direction in social relationships which men had for centuries grown accustomed to expect from her, not as a result of any conviction that she was trespassing upon territory on which she had no right to be found, but because the complex of those relationships had seemed to become too involved for her to have any hope of disentangling them. The Church threw upon the individual conscience a task which had become too much for her corporate mind. Whether such a development would in any case have taken place, even though the Church had preserved its corporate character unbroken by the schisms of the Reformation period, must be a matter of opinion. But as one traces the efforts of the later schoolmen to keep pace with the moral problems which surrounded the development of money power—issues, for instance, concerning the legitimacy of interest and credit—one feels they are pursuing a foe which, if it does not possess heavier guns, can at least boast

superior engines, and must inevitably escape beyond their range before long.

The Church, then, ceased to speak, not because it surrendered its claim to do so, but because it could no longer frame a message appropriate to the situation. The first respect, therefore, in which we find our problem different from what it was when the Church successfully grappled with it is in this phenomenon of complex and impersonal economic relationships—relationships which the break-up of the old land system, the developments of the industrial revolution, and the autocracy of contemporary finance have successively rendered a thousand times more complex and impersonal than in the sixteenth century. And at this point a question arises which demands to be faced, though Christians have, for the most part, evaded it. Is there a point in social development beyond which relationships become so complex, responsibility so impossible to fix, and personality so inevitably submerged that a society which passes it necessarily escapes by doing so from moral control, and must, for that reason, be adjudged incompatible with the demands of Christianity? This I take to be the fundamental point which the writings of Mr. A. J. Penty<sup>1</sup> seek to focus for the attention of Christians, though he does not often put the matter quite in this way; and it is certainly a standpoint worthy of more study than has yet been given to it. It is not sufficient for the Christian to dismiss such a view as reactionary and pass on; this is to surrender to the standards of a contemporary “progress,” in itself necessarily transient, and no possible substitute for the absolute values by the light of which alone the Church can be satisfied to judge the developments of society.

There is an alternative, however, and it is this: that the essential difficulty has arisen not from the growing

<sup>1</sup> Notably *Towards a Christian Sociology* (1923).

complexity of social relations, but from the failure of the Church to expand its outlook and its teaching to match them. We are accustomed to talk of the inexhaustible resources open to us in our Faith and its best traditions, but we have so far, in regard to social issues, made very small effort to exhaust them. The Copec Conference, for example, though the climax of the largest effort so far made in this direction, was important, as most of us have always realised it must necessarily be, rather for the work which it indicated for the immediate future than for what its preparation and deliberations actually achieved. It was essential as a survey of the ground to be occupied—or much of it—but the process of occupation has scarcely begun. We have not got our “Christian Sociology”; we have but realised the reasons for which we need one, and some of the directions in which it must be sought. As our task proceeds from its small beginnings, we may find that the implications of personality, service, and brotherhood lead Christians to demand in some respects a more direct system of relationship, or social arrangements which enable individual responsibility to be more easily and clearly fixed. We may find, too, that social principles and institutions which have been characteristic of past ages when they have been subject to Christian influences—the just price, guild organisation of industry, a system of widely and not very unequally distributed property held for use and not for power, to name but a few examples—are applicable in new forms to our own, and will make automatically, in proportion as they can be applied, for a simpler economy than that to which the recent developments of financial and industrial power have accustomed us. But whether this be so or not, we cannot say definitely that the complex of our modern economic relationships is beyond the power of Christian thought and guidance to moralise and to control, until the Church has faced

the problem with an intensity of application and upon a scale far beyond anything that has been attempted so far.

*(c) New factors of urgency and difficulty*

I feel it necessary to dwell at some length upon this factor of social complexity because I believe that its significance for our problem has been somewhat overlooked hitherto. It is surely because the average man or woman feels that his or her individual conduct can effect so little in the social relations of to-day, that responsibility for social failure cannot be fixed on any particular person or group of persons, and that this must necessarily continue to be so, that they turn from the idea of the Church having any message for the social and industrial life of mankind as something meaningless to them. Either they surrender to the evils of the prevailing order as being inevitable and almost in the nature of things, or they throw blame upon the "system," and conceive that nothing more is needed than to exchange it for another. Ethical motives and appeals appear irrelevant; religious ones even more so. The Church has got to prove that the social system which escaped her control in the sixteenth century is susceptible of being brought back within the sphere of religious influence, if she would command the attention and reawaken the hopes of the thousands who have lost faith in the validity of her claims to offer anything but "the consolations of religion" to the individual soul.

For it is this necessity which, more than anything else perhaps, imposes upon us the task of seeking to work out a sociology that shall be distinctive and authentic. Christianity, blazing a trail through the jungle of economic and industrial complexity, has pre-eminently the power and the obligation to win back for the soul the clear possession of its most fundamental

rights—the rights of responsibility and freewill, on which alone can human personality found its claims to self development and liberty. Democracy is meaningless if it does not mean at least this—that a man can call his soul his own. Yet it is this possibility that the modern economic system, which demands from the individual almost nothing but an assiduous and unremitting conformity, has in effect destroyed. “If soap-boiling is bad for brotherhood,” Mr. Chesterton once observed, “it is soap-boiling that must go, not brotherhood”; but the spirit of this age will scarcely assent to such a category of values. It is at this point that the social demands of our faith, rightly understood, come most sharply into collision with the outlook of the modern world. That world accepts the commercial and industrial technique which a soulless economic development has imposed upon it, and then seeks to alleviate its consequences to the individual by a humanitarian reform fatally limited in its effect, not only by its inadequate philosophy, but also by the hypothesis of progress it has unquestioningly adopted.

It must be clear that Christianity can never content itself with such an outlook and remain true to its message, not merely because—as is, indeed, woefully obvious—the happiness of mankind is hindered thereby, but because something even deeper than man’s happiness is affected, and that is his responsibility. It is not the problem of machine production and repetition work alone with which modern economic development confronts us, serious as are the questions which these phenomena inevitably raise. More serious still in this connection is the centralisation of initiative in a rapidly decreasing few, operating ever further and further away from the realities of production, and the fatal effect of that consequent feeling of powerlessness which creeps over the rest of society. This is in the exact sense “soul-destroying,” for it enfeebles the

conscience and paralyses the will. The Church must deliver her challenge to this tendency, following this up by pointing a way of escape and urging so far as becomes practicable the exemplification of it, so that those who listen to her message may know once again that in their work and in their public life there is truly a spiritual opportunity and a Christian way. She must show that her social demands are rooted in the irrefragable claims of the individual soul.

We are brought back to the point that has already been raised : will these demands involve what many call " a simpler way of life " ? The phrase is a vague one ; and the question itself does not perhaps suggest the most fruitful way of approaching the problem. For it tends to confuse two points which, however closely they may seem to be related, none the less require to be kept distinct if we are to assure ourselves of that clear thinking which the subject demands. Simplicity in social relations (to accept for the moment a rather unsatisfactory term) is urged, on the one hand, by those who fear the dangers of luxury and indulgence to the individual soul and to society as a whole, and, on the other, by those who believe there is no alternative method of restoring the rights and opportunities of human personality. There is clearly a great deal in both these points which merits our consideration, but they are not the same point, nor is it certain that the more ascetic deductions which some are ready to draw from them are well founded. We have to beware of merely subjective interpretations in these matters. Many are prepared to class as luxuries goods and experiences which they themselves are content to do without, and perhaps are not equipped to appreciate ; or to dismiss as indulgences habits for which they have no personal inclination or aptitude. Again, the more temperamentally self-reliant are prone to regard with dislike and suspicion methods involving

association, and still more routine, in work or play, which to many are thoroughly natural and congenial.

The guiding principle for the Christian in these matters would seem to be not "simplicity" of any kind sought as an end in itself, but rather the release of personality. If this is found to involve simpler social and economic relations and a less complex technique, we must be ready to demand them, however unfashionable our protest may appear in the eyes of the world. But let us beware of seeming to urge the rejection of the good gifts that God has revealed in art and science to succeeding generations, simply because of our incapacity to discern the proper use of them. For we must remember that between us and that mediæval age in which a Christian sociology was last formulated lies that enlargement of the human horizon which we know as the Renaissance, as a result of which culture, art and social happiness came to be thought of as 'goods' in themselves, rightly to be pursued and enjoyed for their own sake, and not suspected as the snares of a hostile and transient world. In so far as this resulted in the secularisation of thought and feeling we must reject its influence as a false one, in that it exalted the gifts of God at the expense of the Author of them. We know the evils that followed upon this tendency; but we must surely recognise too that the Renaissance did bring to mankind a just sense of release and power and joy, and we should be the more emboldened to proclaim that the earth which the Lord has made is not in essence evil, but meant to be the scene of a Divine order. We must reconcile the fundamental Christian demands of sacrifice and self-oblation with the opportunities for that fuller and deeper enjoyment of God's gifts here which science and invention would now be capable, if rationally directed, of spreading so widely; and thus show that while Christianity demands of men that they must surrender

what makes them unholy, it does not necessarily compel them to embrace what makes them unhappy.

The problem of elaborating a system of Christian teaching and discipline thus presents itself with much more complexity to us than it did to the early or mediæval Church. The doctrine of social evolution, combining with the experience of recent centuries, makes it impossible for us to look upon either society or the minds of those who compose it as static to anything like the same degree that they appeared to the writers of the Middle Ages. Change was, of course, proceeding throughout the period at a far more rapid rate than has been apparent, even to many modern students of the subject, but the façade of feudal and guild organisation remained standing so long, and underwent such little apparent alteration, that the framework of society seemed like something permanently and unalterably fixed. While there is good reason to hope and believe that a far greater degree of stability would result from the setting of society upon sounder moral foundations than those upon which it now so uneasily reposes, few of us to-day expect or desire to see social development stand still to anything like the extent that seemed natural to the mediæval mind. While on the one hand we recognise that the different stages of development at which nations and classes have arrived make rigid rules of conduct in social relations misleading and dangerous, on the other hand, we cannot contemplate divisions of culture and education existing to-day as of a kind that can be either expected or desired to continue indefinitely. The many respects in which the idea of evolution, both in theory and in experience, will influence all our thinking in the attempt to work out standards of Christian living cannot be further indicated; but it is clearly a factor of the greatest significance in distinguishing the outlook of the twentieth century from that of the fourteenth. Indeed, it

renders the task which the earlier century found at once so natural and so necessary more urgent than ever for our later one, and the whole Church will soon find herself drawn into the great effort that will be needed, from the impossibility of standing aside when so essential a part of her mission to the world in this age is being striven for and prepared.

*(d) New factors of hope*

Our problem is thus vastly larger than that which presented itself to the mediæval Church, but so also is our equipment for coping with it. Whether the expansion of our resources is commensurate with that of the task we have to undertake must be a matter of opinion. Some may be inclined to doubt it. Experience and the lessons drawn therefrom by sociologists and economists sometimes seem to have taught us less about what we should seek than about what we should avoid, and less still in regard to what are the essential and practical steps for society to take in the immediate future. But even the sceptic in these matters must admit that we are not in the dark to anything like the extent that the mediævalists were. We are far less compelled than were they to rely upon theorising and abstract reasoning in forming our conclusions ; and we know far more about the directions in which social institutions are capable of development and what consequences may be expected to follow for society and the individual. Whether an extension of social science, however widespread, will avail much by itself against the power of sectional interests to exploit society for selfish purposes is very questionable. But it is an undoubted asset in any endeavour to discover the true purpose of God for mankind in its social and economic relationships.

But probably the most important respect in which our problem has to be distinguished from what it was half a dozen centuries ago lies in the fact that in the

meantime it has been upon his individual conscience solely that the faithful Christian has been driven to rely. The consequences of this fact are enormous, and will condition any attempt by the Church to restore a system of direction and discipline. We may desire passionately the return of authoritative teaching and action founded upon it in the social and economic sphere. We may feel deeply the abdication of the Church from such a task for three hundred years or more to have been a dereliction of duty impossible to justify. But we must at the same time recognise that the laying of such a burden upon the individual soul has helped to give us a tradition of "conscientiousness" that, when it is related to the corporate prayer, study, thought, and action of the Church as a whole, should add to our restored Christian teaching a quality of conscious co-operation far more splendid than any mere submission to a purely authoritative system, however pure the faith and devotion of those who offer it, could ever be.

Recent centuries, then, even if from our present point of view we feel bound to deplore their general tendency, have been by no means barren for our purpose. They have, indeed, in the opportunities they have afforded of developing the Christian conscience, handed on to us a priceless asset for the future. But this development has been accompanied by drawbacks almost equally great, which add to the difficulties of the present situation. By leaving Christians without any guidance whatsoever it no doubt emphasised their responsibility for the conscientious few. But it induced the rest either to follow their own inclinations in the first place and commend the process to their consciences as best they could afterwards, or to fall in with the convenient view which proclaimed that business is business, and a process with which religion and ethics can have no concern. Again, those who inherit the tradition of a

high conscientiousness, and strive to-day to make their social and economic relationships square with Christian values and demands, have naturally acquired such a habit of "private judgment" and belief in its validity, that in many cases they are little likely to welcome, or even to understand, the necessity of a corporate effort to discover and apply Christian standards. All these tendencies in an individualistic direction are stimulated by the characteristics of modern industrial and commercial life, with its traditional doctrines of self-reliance, individual responsibility, and personal control, and its acceptance of private gain as a criterion both of personal success and public welfare. The idea of moral standards corporately arrived at, of direction in social affairs given by a spiritual authority, of discipline in the sense of religious penalties imposed for flagrant defiance of Christian demands in the sphere of industrial morality—of such developments the average church- and chapel-goer has scarcely yet begun to dream. We cannot expect him to understand them for some time—especially in those circles where Protestant influences have been strong. A laity accustomed to the formula that "no priest shall come between my soul and God," even in spiritual matters, will be slow to accept and understand any such apparent intervention in social ones.

For all these reasons, then—and no doubt for many more—the Church, if she is to take up explicitly and corporately, as many of us feel that she must, her challenge to worldly standards, will not be returning to any bygone phase of her history; she will be entering upon a new one. The task seems so large as we contemplate it that we may sometimes be tempted to turn away from it as beyond our powers. We have scarcely begun to restore the "Christian sociology" we need. We cannot rely even upon the faithful sons and daughters of the Church to understand as yet the need

for such a thing, or to welcome its application. Yet we cannot—if we believe God is calling upon the Church once again to resume her prophetic office, and put herself at the head of a society, drifting, as it often seems, in bewilderment and almost in despair—refuse to answer the voice of the Spirit without treason to our faith. If the Church is not for ever to be open to the charge of “taking sides” in this issue or that, or (much worse) of being too spiritless to take them, she must step out into the open and make a “side” of her own.

What is certain is that this great effort, if we are to make it, must be one to which every Christian is urged at every stage to make his largest possible contribution of prayer, thought, and understanding. Our body of principles will have to be as far as possible self-authenticating. Discussion upon them and their possible application must be constantly going on throughout the Church. And this must be so far organised that its best results radiate to a centre, from which they may reissue, clarified, and in some measure, systematised, in all directions. Questions of authority, of order, and of discipline will ultimately be found, no doubt, to be of great importance, but they are not, it would seem, the most immediate ones. We have first to bring to bear the spiritual power and private piety of countless Christians upon the social and economic issues which have for so long been reserved for worldly wisdom alone. Not only will this release for the enrichment of the Church as a whole gifts which find to-day far too narrow an outlet, but it will set the saintly life, which so many truly seek, upon a more secure because a broader foundation, and enlarge the ideal of service beyond the horizon of those immediate relationships which too often bounds it. Moreover, we shall thus arouse, as we may hope, a ferment of single-minded thought and disinterested inquiry which, while giving fresh depth

and meaning to the religion of those who engage in it, will present Christianity in a new and striking guise to the world outside. For what society needs for its renewal is an inspiration and a message independent of the forces by which our bankrupt civilisation is controlled; and it is these that our faith and its finest traditions, interpreted anew, alone can give, not for the individual only, but for the social order, apart from which his salvation can never fittingly be sought.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WAY FORWARD

LOOKING now to the future, and postulating the need to realise there in combination the Christian ideals of all previous periods in the Church's history, we arrive at the problem of developing and perfecting two separate but closely connected processes of thought.

#### *(a) The Reformulation of Principles*

In the first place we need to recover the lost trail of social idealism which was the great possession of the Middle Ages. This does not mean that we go back to an obsolete system of economic practice, nor that we reinstate without criticism the precise political theories and maxims which were current then. After all, the period of the Middle Ages was one of relative immaturity. Life has carried the world beyond the point where the social and political thinking of those days could possibly be adequate still. A far-spread commercial world has since developed out of that more primitive civilisation of agriculture, village industry, and simple barter. It is not to be expected that the old wisdom should be adequate to-day. But though the economics and the political institutions of the Middle Ages are out of date, the social principles of the Middle Ages and the moral philosophy they rest upon represent very much of the true moral heritage of the ancient world as a whole. When we get these general principles once more articulated it may be

worth while to turn back upon some of the economic prescriptions of the Middle Ages—the principle, for instance, of the “just price”—and consider whether they have still any suggestive, if not regulative, value in the newer world. For these principles represent that body of social ideals for which the common man has an hereditary instinct to stand, except when he is stampeded by self-interested fear or greed. They represent an ethic which can be defended against all comers as right and reasonable on the general view of life which Christianity has inspired and apart from the special motives which would only actuate the more devout. It is, at the same time, an ethic upon which the more exacting standards of conduct that Christ inspires can themselves be grafted naturally.

But the value of thus regaining the lost tradition of social life is subject to one important condition. The condition is that the body of Christian social principles which we can pick up again from the Middle Ages should be subject to criticism and refertilisation from the body of moral and political ideals that Christians have learned from subsequent experience and reflection under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We have to-day an altogether new sense of the value of the individual and of his independent and special capacities for unique self-expression, a new sense of the spiritual good to be derived from a right use of the material wealth of the world, a new ability to break away in thought from the political arrangements which were our inheritance from the Ancient and Mediæval worlds, a new ideal of representative self-government, a new sense of the flexibility of our social and political institutions, and at least the beginnings of a body of knowledge about the workings of society in the past by which to forecast with some confidence its probable reaction to changes that might be introduced in the future. With all these new assets, it is possible to imagine the

development (by degrees) of a new sociology more truly based in knowledge, more critically Christian in its presuppositions and purposes, more free from doctrinaire and *a priori* elements, and allowing more scope for exception and adaptation, to meet the needs of special times and situations than ever we have had in the past.

One question of primary importance for to-day is the points at which and the degrees to which the customary rights of property shall be allowed to maintain themselves against the rights inherent in human personality, whatever its holding in the material wealth of the world. The rights of property are at far too high a premium in the modern world; but there is no body of ordered theory by which their exuberance can be judged, and according to which they can be curbed. To ensure mobility without loss of stability, modern society has left its relationships and its customs, and indeed its whole culture, to the sole arbitrament of forces dependent upon the balance of money power. It is quite obviously a dethronement of spiritual or personal consideration from the place of influence in social progress and the enthronement of blind material forces instead. In the light of the results the current principles that go almost unchallenged are here proved to be as intolerable in fact as they would seem to be in theory.

A question of corresponding importance is that of the moral sanction behind the modern state, whether in its dealings with its own citizens or with other states. Here again the current modern understanding of the matter is without real moral foundation. The independent sovereignty of the modern state was claimed for purely practical reasons: there was no higher authority any nation was prepared to recognise in fact. But when it came to be assumed that there was no higher authority in theory either, no principle of loyalty to a universal international ideal, then the

conception of the modern state was at once demoralised. The guiding principle of the state became simply that of enlightened selfishness ; and its exercise of force at once lost all its ultimate religious sanctions. Between this non-moral view of the state and the materialistic view of individual property rights just mentioned, the religious sanctions of national law and government also dwindle almost to nothing.

Hence, too, the lack of spiritual principle behind our modern democratic, and especially our political, institutions. Political life is commonly regarded as the scene of a fight between rival material interests in society, checked only by the single principle that it should be constitutional in form. True, there is a growing feeling that the fight should be conducted in a reasonable and kindly spirit. It is hoped that parliamentary procedure will afford a means by which selfishness and prejudice will discover the point beyond which they cannot reasonably assert their claims ; but that their claims are in principle subordinate to any wider or higher considerations is not seriously believed. There is thus no general conception of political life as being the way to realise an ideal social order. But apart from such an ideal, political life must be void of religious principle. On such foundations it will be quite impossible to make democratic institutions the means of a spiritual unification of the national mind and will.

Behind this crumbling theory of modern society lay the belief that " things " were means only to the lower life of men, and that " law " and " industry " were concerned only with these baser things. But we have attained to a better philosophy of the relation of the material to the spiritual. The principle of " detachment " from material and social interests, in the interest of the soul, has given place to another principle. Material possessions and social relationships

are now seen to be the very means by which the spiritual life is to be realised. The detachment we seek is a detachment not from these things themselves but from a private greed for them, an unsocial will regarding them, a gross use of them. The remarriage of the artistic with the religious spirit has given to all material things and social processes new spiritual possibility and purpose. This more spiritual view of the material world makes still more antiquated the current theory of politics as the sphere for the pursuit only of the lesser, baser, more materialistic interests of men. It invites us to develop the principle that all our institutions should be reconsidered from the point of view of their contribution to a social life of spiritual worth to all its members. From that standpoint all the accepted estimates of our present legal and political rights and institutions are seen to be purely derivative and open to question in the light of experience and in view of more positive spiritual ideals of social life. No true direction of Christian social conduct is possible until we have allowed these spiritual principles of social life to gain an ascendancy over the material principles which are now dominant.

We shall not, however, succeed in formulating a Christian Sociology for to-day unless we can find, as a basis for it, a theological conception which at once fulfils and surpasses those which underlay the Christian sociologies of the past; and this we must therefore seek. Now the underlying social principle of the Middle Ages was that of a Just Order based on the ruling conception of the sovereign authority of God. We have to recover that idea of Divine Right attaching to the social order and overruling every individual or lesser right. But we have to think of society less as a sphere for the maintenance of fixed sovereign rule over sinful men, and more as the sphere for the incarnation of Christian love in redeemed men. The aim is not to

make persons conform of constraint to a predetermined pattern of social order ; it is to inspire persons to ever fuller development for which they will need to create new social forms in free fellowship. We seek a social order which shall promote the unfolding of personality, with all its wondrous possibilities of abundant life, in all ranks of men. We seek to place men in relationships in which they can all exercise their higher powers and show that they do so by the joy with which they fulfil their function in society. Nothing less can do justice to personality as of divine origin and meaning. Nothing less can accord to personality the reverent love that is its due. This will not do away with the need for discipline and order in the body politic, with all the limitations and restrictions which these impose. But Justice, as it is commonly understood, can no longer be the all-inclusive principle of Social Order. Ideals of Fellowship, based upon the intrinsic nobility and capability of all human personality, must be at least as important an element in the whole. Surely, then, it is to the Johannine ideas of Love and Fellowship that we must look for the basis of the Christian Sociology of to-morrow.

(b) *The corporate reassessment of conduct*

The second line of thought to be worked is a more empirical one. We want to collect the reports which enlightened Christian consciences give of the present social order at the precise points where they know it best and become its instruments. And along with such moral criticism of our present social life we should collect also the reports of all that is being done (and thought) constructively by Christian minds toward the embodiment in life of principles more consonant with the mind of Christ than those at present in control.

It is not suggested that this would give us a completely articulated system of Christian social life ; but

it would give us criticism of the present order, and clues to its amendment, of more positive moral authority than any that could be reached by abstract intellectual processes alone. Few of us to-day imagine that a Christian social order can be reached by any other route than one which mounts from precedent to precedent, by carefully chosen adjustments (often quite minute) inspired at once by conscience and by reason.

The process may, however, be far more rapid if the parallel development of theory just asked for is closely linked with this attempt to articulate criticism and observe the lines along which the best consciences of the day are being driven by the inward compulsion of their own observations of life and Christianity. Criticism is apt to be either too timid or too riotous, when it is out of relation to a coherent and reasonable body of alternative ideals. So, too, constructive effort is apt to be erratic and therefore unproductive, if indeed it be not altogether stifled, in the absence of any such body of ideas. Both criticism and constructive thought and effort have, indeed, suffered from such a handicap too long.

Along these lines it may be possible to arrive at the new technique of Christian living which Mr. Tawney has said we need to-day for every profession and calling. The casuistry for to-day is one that studies the problems of Christian conduct in the typical social settings which different occupations represent, rather than one that applies accepted standards to exceptional individual cases. For, at present, the Christian standards for typical situations are still undefined.

Such a development, however, cannot be expected to reach the proportions which will make it really effective unless a general body of active Christian opinion and endeavour is made contributory to it. And that requires a widespread and well-devised organisation of united Christian thinking carried out through the

Churches, with some recognised body of workers—shall we say, Copec—as its immediate head and front. We are aiming, in the first instance, at the focussing of all that is best in Christian thinking about the present social life of the world—its merits and defects, its tendencies upward or downward, the opportunities it affords for Christian witness and service, and the possibilities of shaping it along better lines. Copec makes no claim to have drawn into its service all who are needed to give its findings their ideal weight ; but perhaps it has made a sufficiently good beginning to justify the hope that others who are necessary will presently come along.

There are those in the world who have more right to speak on these matters than others. Moral enthusiasm alone will not give such a right, nor will mere quantity of experience of business and public affairs. Such authority belongs only to those who have both experience and insight, both knowledge and faith. Nor is it sufficient that a man should have faith in the abstract, and experience in the concrete—the two kept apart. Those only have a title to express Christian judgments in these matters who have taken the body of their beliefs about the ends and possibilities of life direct from Jesus Christ, and have brought them to bear upon their experience in a life that has deliberately, consciously, and in Christian expectation, sought first the kingdom of God upon earth. That in itself is a searching qualification ; but there is yet another. Those only have any clear title to expect to reach the truth in these matters who have sufficient simplicity and humility of mind to be able to doubt their own generalisations from experience, and account the generalisations of others, at least provisionally, as entitled to no less careful consideration than their own.

Now it is such judgments as these that Copec has been endeavouring to reach. It has first postulated

that those who take part in its work should believe that the mind of Christ is regulative in all social matters, and should desire to find it. Granted that, it has sought to call to its aid whoever has any notable and representative experience or knowledge to bring to bear on any matter, without regard to their present views and conclusions. It has next associated them in sustained efforts of co-operative thinking, calculated to check the more impatient minds, to correct idiosyncrasies, and to draw into harmony all minds of humble, sympathetic and therefore imaginative power. Those who have never had experience of such united thinking, interspersed with prayer, can hardly imagine how effective the method can be for fertilising mind from mind and dissipating prejudices acknowledged, in retrospect, to have been utterly blinding and disabling. It is not claimed that the best result is secured automatically or infallibly, or that the process is without occasional disappointment and wastefulness. Taken as a whole, however, the result can hardly be other than impressive.

This is hardly the place in which to work this proposal up into a detailed scheme ; but one may go the length of imagining the existence of little groups of Christian men and women in every locality, and in every industry, and in connection with each and all of the different ramifications of modern, social life, reporting (perhaps in response to stimulus from some corresponding central group) upon the things which the Christian mind is thinking and desiring and attempting, in regard to the social life which it is in a position particularly to understand. One imagines an interaction between a series of central groups concerned with particular problems or phases of social life and local groups concerned with the same problem. One imagines these central groups in effective touch with each other and with some equally representative body of students of Christian political theory. And one imagines the whole

process of mental co-operation carried out on a scale and with a thoroughness and a publicity which would enable it to command the good opinion and draw in the co-operation of, at any rate, a fairly representative multitude of intelligent Christian people, between them holding posts and having experience at all the important points of vantage in the organisation of modern social life. Such an instrument of co-operative thinking would do more than bring together the best results of the thinking of the past. It would enormously stimulate the mind and conscience of those engaged in it and become itself a valued instrument, perhaps the best and the only effective instrument, for infusing into the common thought of Christian people of all ranks, those applied ideals which are the first requisites of an effective process of education in Christian conduct.

One assumes as a primary condition of such group activity that it should be carried on in an atmosphere of prayer, so that all the thinking it stimulates should be penetrated by the deepest religious feeling and the best and highest religious thought. And this would apply equally to the work done in the localities where the contemplated system of Christian thinking would have its afferent nerves, and at the centre in which its results are focussed and from which the stimulus to fresh thought and action is radiated out again. How far such a development would make possible the definition of a body of Christian principles which could fairly be made the standards of Christian discipline in social conduct, and how far it would make such discipline unnecessary, because itself providing a less obtrusive and more effective stimulus to higher modes of Christian living, only time can show.

*(c) The weight of the consequent conclusions*

There can, however, be little doubt that the authority reached in this way is precisely the kind of authority

that is desirable in the twentieth century. It is the authority of wide experience, the authority of careful thought, the authority of agreed emphasis. It is authority not pretending to say the last word on the subject, but claiming to set out a problem in an orderly way, with its terms truly stated, its irrelevant features thrust into the background, its proportions stated in a way that is convincing to many minds, its deeper issues drawn into prominence, its appeal to the Christian conscience set in a higher light than usually falls upon it. Copec, for example, does not put out any of its findings as final and beyond question. On the contrary, it appeals to all congregations of Christian people to consider them carefully in Christian fellowship, receiving only such points as commend themselves to the Christian conscience and contributing their criticism to improve those which are at fault. Such responsible presentation of a problem can carry the individual to a point where the problem becomes one which he can face both honestly and intelligently between himself and God alone, a problem clear to his conscience and not too complex for him to face. This kind of authority serves to brace the mind rather than to demand mere acquiescence. It is lifting and not depressing, educative and not tyrannical. At the same time, if based upon sufficient thought and experience, it may become really challenging, with a challenge that can hardly be evaded. We need in the modern world more and more to challenge the Christian mind with just such relative and provisional judgments, imperfect enough to leave the mind its own responsibility and freedom, weighty enough to demand a worthy attention and response. In the long run counsel proceeding from such sources might acquire a cumulative weight that would give a large degree of confidence to all who rested upon it, whether for their own social action or as the teachers of others.

It is surprising, if not even a little ridiculous, that the points on which a Christian position is defined and insisted upon should be so few. At present there is hardly anything but the stricter conditions of divorce and re-marriage, the resistance to Sunday trading and amusement, the emphasis on temperance and the close scrutiny of cases of bankruptcy, in which the Christian communities try to maintain a higher line than that drawn by public opinion outside. Even in these cases there is no unanimity of judgment ; though, to be sure, complete uniformity of teaching is not necessary to stimulate the Christian conscience : it is enough that attention is drawn to an issue, and the attempt to set up a Christian standard is sincerely made. We hope, however, that a time is coming when there will be many more matters on which the Christian mind will make itself effectively felt. We hope, indeed, that such positive and decisive teaching will presently safeguard the claims of personality to proper respect in every social relationship, and make good the right of the community to protect its fellowship against the encroachments of material interest wherever it is attacked. And we believe that in the future, when such standards of Christian conduct have been carefully reached, professedly Christian people will not lightly disregard them. Authoritative pronouncements will not of themselves secure this. But if accompanied by a lively and widespread interest in the discovery of the Christian standards of life, they will help greatly to strengthen and support the growth of an accepted ideal.

It should be observed that in this attempt to arrive at Christian positions on modern social questions due weight is given to both of the two chief factors in the case. These are, first, knowledge of the issues and of the general mechanism of the parts of the social organism involved in any question ; and, second, insight into the values most worth preserving in our

social life, because most consonant with the Christian ideal of personality. Competence in respect of one part of the problem can never make up for incompetence in respect of the other. Our present difficulties arise very largely from the long divorce of ethical and spiritual reflection from all thought about the technique of social and political life. The moralists and the theologians have conceived the ideal Christian life as lived, not exactly *in vacuo*, but certainly not amid the concrete relationships of our modern industrial civilisation; whilst the economists and politicians have been long schooled to think that their problems were exclusively technical. No wonder the average Christian is at present incapable of talking balanced sense on many of these complex questions: for he was taught by men who were themselves incompetent, almost on principle and as a matter of privilege. But we cannot any longer acquiesce in such deliberate incompetence, with all its disastrous consequences to the moral authority of Christian teaching, for we begin to see the way out.

There remains the question: What is the authority of such Christian judgments for those outside the Church and for those especially who do not find regulative force in an idea for the sole reason that it traces its authority to Jesus Christ? Their authority is, of course, not the same for these as it is for Christian people; but it may yet be very considerable and important. For if such judgments are well based, they will appeal to the moral and spiritual instinct of human nature at its best. They will carry conviction to thoughtful minds that they are on right lines and that response to them would lead humanity upward and onward. In so far as this is so they will help to express the challenge of Christ to the human conscience in terms which carry a real appeal. It may even be that, in the long run, the strength of the initial appeal of Christian beliefs to

those outside the Church will depend upon the weight of convincing suggestion for social righteousness that Christian preachers can put forward in the Name of Christ. For nothing can reveal and commend Christianity to the alert conscience of to-day so effectively as a profound application of Christian truth to the unsolved moral problems of our social life. The way of the world at present makes Christian principles not simply incredible but inconceivable to many: only the way of Christ for the world applied universally, and depicted vividly and clearly, will make them see Him in the full majesty of His claim to be the Lord of all.

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